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# *the Sea Swallow*



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share a common background — the sea itself — regardless of  
nationality.\*

*Aims and activities.* The primary aim of the Society is to promote a  
forum for the exchange of information on seabirds, and of land-  
birds at sea, by members for whom birdwatching is a spare-time  
recreation and hobby. The secondary aim is to co-ordinate the  
efforts of individual members using standardised recording methods  
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Material for publication in *Sea Swallow* should be sent to the Editor  
(see instructions to authors inside back cover).

\*An application form for membership is at page 75 in this edition of *Sea Swallow*.

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Brown-headed Gull *Larus brunnicephalis*.

Bombay Harbour, March 1990

*Photo:* Michael Casement



## FOREWORD

Another busy year of solid achievement is recorded in these pages, and it is heartening to see a healthy flow of records, of both seabirds and landbirds, from many corners of the globe, and a number of new contributors. It is good to read of Petty Officer Howell's active participation in the Joint Service expedition, run by the Army this year to Ascension, and I hope Kevin Morgan's epic journey to South Africa and back will encourage other yachtsmen to keep their eyes open and report the birds they see. There are still many untapped sources, and we are hoping to hear from participants in the Whitbread Round the World Yacht Race.

But there is no room for complacency. The prime aim of RNBWS is to encourage and develop the interest of our younger brethren at sea, to join in the communal effort of identifying and recording birds from ships. Alas, the numbers of new recruits have not, in recent years, kept pace with the loss by resignation, retirement and "natural wastage". It is incumbent on each of us to try to encourage and recruit at least one new member, because without a steady influx of new blood, the flow of records from sea will rapidly diminish. So please do your best. We also welcome your views and ideas for the future. Let us hear them at the AGM, on 7 December.

With best wishes, and good birding for 1991.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter Stanger", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

## EDITORIAL

I owe a big "thank you" to the large number of correspondents and contributors who have made this volume possible, not least to my long-suffering wife who has had to put up with the piles of papers, plotting sheets and charts littering our drawing room for most of the summer months. She has also kindly drawn the various maps. I am especially grateful to Captain Neil Cheshire, who has successfully combined his seagoing activities in Australian waters, with the mammoth task of analysing the seabird records this year.

I apologise in advance for the errors which have probably crept in; the proof-reading has been exceptionally difficult this year, with many key authors *incommunicado* at sea at the crucial stages. And I regret the *errata* to *Sea Swallow* 38, shown at page 74.

Our new Chairman, Commander Mike Barritt, is currently somewhere in mid-Atlantic, where I hope he is seeing many interesting birds. On his behalf also, I must give advance notice of an imminent increase in subscription rates. It is not yet finalised what these will be, and the subject will be on the agenda for decision at the next AGM, on Friday 7 December (at 1400). For the past eight years we have struggled to keep the annual member's subscription down to a level affordable to the most junior young seaman — £5.00. But the ever-rising printing and postage costs, combined with a net decrease in RNBWS membership, means that steps must soon be taken to safeguard our financial future. Various cost-cutting measures, together with a number of generous financial "windfalls" have merely delayed the inevitable. Subject therefore to agreement at the AGM, the cost of *Sea Swallow* will be increased in 1991 to £5.00 (or US\$10.00), and Associate Members and libraries will be invoiced accordingly (plus postage).

The subscription rates for covenant and non-covenant members will similarly be increased, and details will be announced in due course.

But equally as important as your continued subscriptions, is your active support, and material for *Sea Swallow*. I welcome photographs and articles, especially if they are reasonably short, and these do not have to be beautifully typed and polished, because I can help (with my AMSTRAD) to achieve this. Nor do subjects have to be very erudite or technical. I have included my own "short note" on Bombay in this issue, as an example to encourage others, and also to prove that I do not spend my whole time in an armchair.

Good luck — and let us hear from you — soon please.

MICHAEL CASEMENT

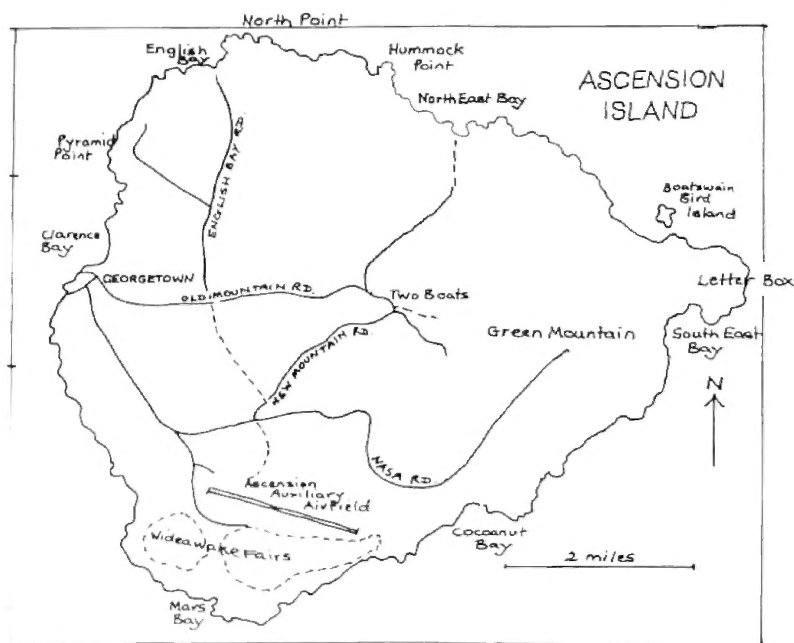
## JOINT SERVICE EXPEDITION TO ASCENSION ISLAND 1990

By Petty Officer (Medical Assistant) Martin Howells, Royal Navy.

I was lucky to represent the RNBWS, as a member of the Army Birdwatching Society (ABWS) expedition to Ascension Island 9-21 March 1990. Our ten-man team was led by Major Hilary Nash, Royal Engineers, and comprised Lt. Col Bill Bowles (deputy leader), Major John Hughes, S/Sgt. Gez Thompson, Sgt. Tim Cowley, Sgt. Davey Earp, LCpl Richard Seargent, two civilians representing the Royal Air Force Ornithological Society (RAFOS) - John Walmsley and Tim Earl, and myself. A nurse working locally on the island, Fiona ('Fi') Lowry, made the eleventh member of our team.

The primary aim of this expedition was to assess the status of breeding bird populations on the island, with priority being given to seabirds, especially the endemic Ascension Island Frigatebird *Fregata aquila*. The second aim was to map and census the Sooty Tern *Sterna fuscata* colonies on the Wideawake Fairs, which is an area covering five square km of lava flows south of the airfield. If time permitted, a third aim was to research the status of the four species of landbirds, introduced to the island in the 19th Century.

The expedition was named Exercise BOOBY II, and built on the experience of two previous expeditions, conducted by RAFOS, the first being 9-25 February 1987, the results of which were published in RAFOS



Journal No. 19 dated October 1989, and Exercise BOOBY I in November 1988, the results of which have yet to be published. The official results of BOOBY II will, be published by ABWS, in their journal *The ADJUTANT*, early next year. What follows here are my own personal memories and experiences, to record my thanks and appreciation to ABWS for being allowed to take part in a thoroughly enjoyable and well-organised expedition.

The team arrived at Wideawake airfield at 0820 on Friday 9 March, and we spent the first day meeting people, and getting sorted out in our accommodation block at the RAF's Rest and Recreation (R & R) Centre at English Bay, in the north of the island. The first snag was the discovery that the luggage of three of our members, including my medical kit, had not been off-loaded, and disappeared over the horizon to the Falklands. The RAF were most helpful, and reassured us that this would reappear, and it duly did - on Sunday night.

One of our visitors on the first day was another member of RNBWS, Chief Petty Officer Ian Calderwood RN, who was enjoying a few days shore leave on the island, and joined us for a few hectic days birding. In the afternoon, we toured the rest of the island, as the roads would allow, to get our general bearings. By the end of the visit, most of the island's coastline had been walked by members of the group, in our quest to explore the more remote and unvisited areas.

Each morning started at 0600, with a rushed cup of tea, followed by a brisk five-minute walk down to the 'Klinker Club' at North Point. This club is a watering hole run by the BBC employees. From the veranda there, we could observe the dawn and dusk flights of the birds as they left for and returned from their feeding grounds to the NW of the island. Depending on the light conditions, the timed counts were for one hour, from 0630-0730 or 0700-0800.

Following breakfast at 0830, a brief for all was held on the day's planned events, so we all knew what to expect. By Saturday afternoon our group was working well together as a seasoned team. Valuable help was also provided by the presence there of a 'support team' of three zoologists comprising Dr Philip Ashmole, and his wife Dr Myrtle Ashmole, both of whom had taken part in the BOU Centenary Expedition to Ascension 1957-59, and Dr Ken Simmons. A fourth, Dr Bill Bourne, dropped in briefly while we were there, on his way back to UK from the Falklands.

Mid-morning and afternoon work usually entailed working down on the lava flows south of the airfield. Here, in the fierce heat of the day, and without shade, the hardest, dirtiest, smelliest, and probably the most rewarding work was done. Our aim was to map and survey all the colonies of Sooty Terns, and the timing was perfect, since the terns had already started laying in the weeks prior to our arrival, and the colonies were growing, with more birds arriving daily. The extent of the inflow was such that the boundaries marked out the previous day were usually found next day to lie inside the colony. Other work in this area included the counting and removing of dead terns, predated by the



Sooty Tern *Sterna fuscata*

feral cats, to provide statistical evidence for the scientific community studying the extent of predation, and the overall effect on the breeding tern populations on the island. Thousands of abandoned eggs, and hundreds of partially eaten terns littered what must have been early colonies during the current breeding cycle, and in one small gully in the lava I counted over 300 abandoned eggs. Whereas in the previous week all nests were occupied, only seven terns remained nesting there. The most unpleasant task was the collection of dead birds from around the edges of the colonies. In our two-week period, we collected over 2,500 bodies, and as the cat population increases at this particular time of food abundance, the numbers probably increase later on in the tern breeding cycle. But it was heartening to see the chicks hatching, during our last few days there. If the adults survived predation by cats, their young chicks faced predation from the sky, from Ascension Frigatebirds. These were always to be found above the Sooty Tern colonies, patrolling low, or sitting amongst the colonies. They were unceasingly mobbed by irate terns.

Work on the 'Fairs' finished around 1600, and we would return to base camp to prepare for our dusk count starting at 1830. These were usually from the Klinker Club, but also from the Ariane tracking station at North-east Point, and an area 45 minutes walk along the cliffs east of there, called Hummock Point. From here one has a very clear view of Bo'sun Bird Island, which is the centre of all seabird life on Ascension.

The evening meal was usually served at 2030, and was always the highlight of the day, when two members, as nominated on the watchbill, tried to out-do the efforts of the previous day's crew to produce a feast to be remembered. This was the only time when fierce rivalry was seen amongst our group.

Following the meal, our group met with the support team of zoologists to discuss the day's events, and to plan the following day's objectives. These 'call-overs', as the Army called them were of great value to all, where we could discuss all manner of topics, and pick the brains of our zoologist friends. It was at one such call-over that we learned the news that The Administrator had denied us access to Bo'sun Bird Island. This ban applied also to the zoologists present, and was a bitter

disappointment to us all. We had to make alternative plans for the primary expedition objective to census the seabird population, and to count the frigatebirds and boobies from a point on the ridge that runs east from Powers Peak, overlooking Bo'sun Bird Island.

Lt. Col. Bill Bowles and I volunteered to undertake this census work. The hardest part of our task was not the actual counting, but getting there, scrambling via the 3.5km of 'goat track', out and around the two little peaks of Weather Post and White Hill, before clambering down onto Powers Peak. From here it was just a matter of negotiating the steep ridge down to a suitable level from where we could safely observe the island. This should not be attempted by those who do not have nerves of steel, and a head for heights (so my leader told me when we were half-way there, and I whole-heartedly agreed!). The first half of this walk from the NASA site, was a straightforward hike down a well-worn track, past Weather Post and up over a saddle to White Hill. The track then disappears to become a faint contour-line across a cliff-face 300m across, which drops down into a gully 600ft below. The lower cliffs, supporting a small colony of White Terns *Gygis alba*, were 200ft below our boots. Having safely crossed that cliff-face, carrying a 45lb pack on our backs, we took a break for some water, and to give thanks to our divine overseer. The walk across to Powers Peak was relatively straight-forward, and provided magnificent views of the top of Bo'sun Bird Island, 1,000ft below. Climbing down over the ridge to our observation point (OP) was just as hair-raising as traversing White Hill. At the bottom of this slope we made our camp; Bill building his 'basha', as only an army man can! This kept out the wind and the rain, and provided a 'home' for a few days. We used this site for three days, when we returned the following week to do our count of Masked Boobies *Sula dactylatra*.

Each count involved a short climb up the rocky slope to the ridge. From there we had magnificent views of the entire top of the island, and of the western and southern cliff-faces. Our counts were done totally independently, using a 60 X magnification telescope, and we only compared written results on return to camp. For the Ascension Frigatebird over a two-day period, the minimum count was 2,410 birds. We counted only the sedentary birds on the steep slopes around the top of the cliffs, and the slopes around the top of the island, but ignored those flying. Three areas were obscured to us from our OP - the northern and eastern cliff-faces, and a deep ravine on the NW cliff-face. These areas were surveyed later by boat, and revealed 30 birds counted on the higher slopes of the ravine, 110 on the SE upper cliff-face, and 94 on the NE cliff-face. We also saw a roosting colony on the mainland, on the higher cliff-face of Letter Box, which generated a lively debate at the evening 'callover' as to whether these were nesting or roosting. But the finally accepted conclusion from all assembled, was that they were merely roosting.

**Species List.** Space does not allow details of the birds seen, and the official results of our studies will be published in due course by ABWS, but we did record the following seabirds:

Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster*. Seen chiefly on the NE coast.  
Masked Booby *S. dactylatra*. The commonest booby.

Red-footed Booby *S. sula*. About 30 birds only counted.  
Black Noddy *Anous minutus*. Second commonest seabird (to Sooty Tern).

Brown Noddy *A. stolidus*. Few in numbers throughout the island, with 350 seen on Bo'sun Bird Island.

Red-billed Tropicbird *Phaethon aetherus*. Few, very rarely seen.

Yellow-billed Tropicbird *P. lepturus*. A total of 13 counted, four of which were sitting on nests.

Sooty Tern *Sterna fuscata*. 100,000+ at Wideawake Fairs were reported by RAFOS in 1987, but our totals have yet to be finalised.

White Tern *Gygis alba*. The only seabird found well inland away from the coast.

Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea*. Sighted twice (11 and 17 March).

Ascension Frigatebird *Fregata aquila*. Seen in all coastal areas.

Madeiran Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma castro*. Several, identified with difficulty. Others were heard calling at night in the vicinity of Letter Box.

The four landbird species introduced in the 19th Century were commonly seen: Indian Mynah *Acridotheres tristis*, Common Waxbill *Estrilda astrild*, Yellow Canary *Serinus flaviventris* and Red-necked Francolin *Francolinus afer*. It had been reported that a British House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* had also been introduced recently in the Georgetown area, but we only saw it once, briefly.



Dusk count from Hummock Point,  
with Bo'sun Island in the background

**Sites of interest to visiting birdwatchers.** (See Map).

**North Point (Klinker Club).** At dawn and dusk. Club open Wed. pm.

**North-east Point (Ariane site).** At dawn and dusk.

**Hummock Point** (45 mins along cliffs from Ariane site). At dawn and dusk. Very isolated, but spectacular views.

**Powers Peak Ridge.** (60 min walk-in from NASA site, 90+ min climb-out.) Extra water is essential (2-3 litres min). Worth all the effort.

**Letter Box.** Approached through Powers Peak (120 min walk-in, 200+ min climb-out.) Very isolated and exposed. Extra water supply (3-4 litres) is essential.

**Mars Bay** (30 min walk from airfield control tower). Sooty Tern Colony.

**Two Boats.** Sewage farm west of the village usually attracts vagrant visitors.

**Green Mountain** (90+ min walk to the top from Two Boats). From barren landscape to lush sub-tropical vegetation. Red Lion public house near the summit provides a welcome watering hole.

On the evening of 10 March we visited The Long Beach, in Clarence Bay, to watch the Green Turtles *Chelonia mydas* come ashore to lay their eggs. We counted 14 arriving between 2200-2359, and closely observed one in particular, obviously struggling to drag its huge body up the beach. This operation took 20 minutes to climb 30 yards, and she then began digging a hole large enough in which to hide. At the bottom of this hole she then scooped out a very much smaller and deeper hole where she started laying her eggs, about 75 minutes after first arrival; she was still laying when we left at about midnight. This was a very moving, and unforgettable experience for all of us there.

Our final day was spent finishing off a few odd jobs, tidying up the R & R Centre, and dashing around the island for a final photo session. After our notes were written up and packed away, we spent a leisurely afternoon seeing what remained of the sights of Ascension. This included a visit to the Volcano Club on the American Base. The food was simple but very filling, and the beer cold. Most of us felt exhausted after our efforts over the last 13 days, and were glad of the relaxation on that final evening. We left late at night on Wednesday 21 March, feeling pleased with our achievements. But there remained a lot of work still to be done, and we felt we could have accomplished more if our stay had been longer.

So ended a very memorable 'holiday'. Perhaps one day I will find myself returning to this marvellous little volcanic island. I certainly hope so.

Martin Howells, 24 Gladstone St., Crosskeys, Newport Gwent NP1 7DB.



## ENTERPRISE NEPTUNE - 'IN THE WAKE OF DIAS'

By Kevin Morgan

On 26 August 1987, the 44ft Bermudan Cutter *Cayenne* sailed from Ipswich on Expedition Neptune, to commemorate the voyage of Bartolomeu Dias, 500 years before, by sailing to the Cape of Good Hope and back (see map opposite). As the marine biologist on board, I had three aims: to learn about observations possible from a small vessel, to persuade other seafarers to take a more active role in observing oceanic life - especially seabirds and cetaceans - and to persuade the 'boating world' to take a more active role in marine conservation.



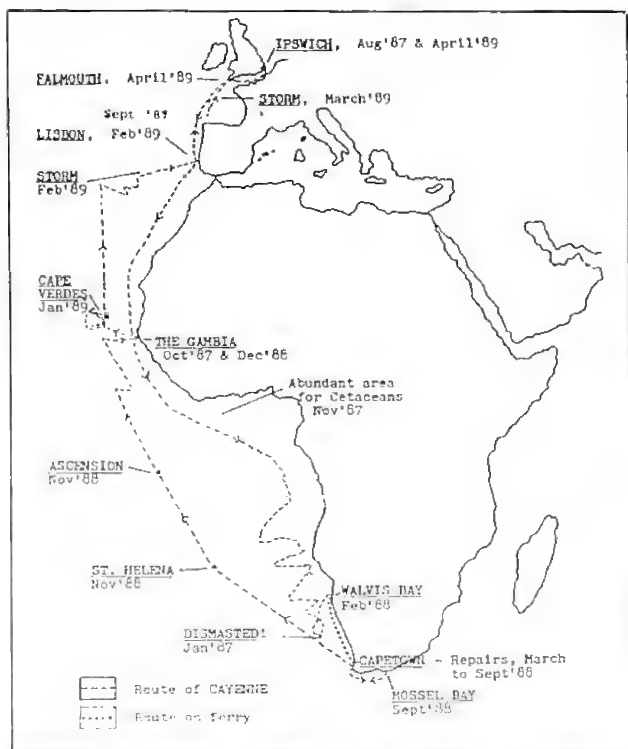
*Cayenne*

The rest of the crew, which varied from 3 to 6, were not experienced ornithologists, and I was keen to find out their abilities to identify seabirds. Their potential was soon proved on the morning of 1 Sep, about 75nm SSW of Bishop's Rock. On awaking for the morning watch, I was told that some 'Storm-petrels' had flown past. I mentioned the possibility of British Storm-petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus*, and their 'bat-like' flight, but the observers described these with 'tern-like' flight. To my surprise, a group of 12 passing some distance off looked more like Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*; when two came closer, and 'paddled' in our wake, showing the yellow webbing to their feet, my identification was confirmed. This demonstrated both the existence of so-called seabird 'rarities' to be seen on a pelagic trip close to British shores, and the ability of seafarers to pick up their 'jizz' correctly.

As we crossed the Bay of Biscay, southerly seabird migration was in evidence, including Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea*, Great

Shearwater *Puffinus gravis*, Sooty Shearwater *P. griseus* and a few Manx Shearwaters *P. puffinus*. On 3 Sept we had a Madeiran Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma castro*, in position 46.1°N 10.1°W, about 165nm NNW Cape Prior. Noted were its habit of circling the boat, rather than following in the wake, and with feet not projecting beyond the tail. Closer to Cape Finisterre, Grey Phalaropes *Phalaropus fulicarius* were seen, and several Sabine's Gulls *Larus sabini*.

On 5 Sep, another unusual sighting was a Little Shearwater *P. assimilis*, in position 42.8°N 10.1°W, 35nm west of C. Finisterre; its small size, fluttering flight, and white sides of face were distinctive. Two Long-tailed Skuas *Stercorarius longicaudus* were also seen. The southerly movement of seabirds, including two Pomarine Skuas *S. pomarinus*, continued until we reached Lisbon on 7th. Here I left *Cayenne*, to rejoin the expedition in Capetown, but the crew kept up their bird records. The chief observer of these was John Nicholas.



### Lisbon to The Gambia (12 September - 7 October 1988).

The first few days were quiet, but did include two Roseate Terns *Sterna dougalli*. Until an unscheduled stop in the Canaries on 22nd, the main species of interest was a Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria fallax* on the 21st, close to the Salvage Is. On the 28th, as *Cayenne* sailed closer to

West Africa, the seabirds increased, and included Gull-billed Tern *Sterna nilotica* and 50+ Little Shearwaters. A few days later, a number of landbirds landed on *Cayenne*, including Olivaceous Warbler *Hippollais pallida* and two Turtle Doves *Streptopelia turtur*. Very close to The Gambia, there were large numbers of coastal birds in the shallow sea region.

### The Gambia to Southern Africa (25 October - 6 January 1988).

The three-man crew planned to get to Capetown in one leg, but this proved difficult, with *Cayenne* often heading into the wind. As was to be typical until reaching the Benguela Current, few seabirds were seen - mostly Cory's Shearwaters and Leach's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*. However, a scattering of White-tailed Tropicbirds *Phaethon lepturus* were seen, and on 17 November a Soft-plumaged Petrel *Pterodroma mollis*, probably the Cape Verde race (or Gon-gon), now considered by many as a separate species *P. feae*, was noted in position 01.4°S 02.0°W, 260nm SSE Abidjan - in the Gulf of Guinea. On 25th, when 150nm off Annabon (Pagalu), a mixed flock of terns was seen, including Sooty Tern *Sterna fuscata* and Black Noddy *Anous minutus*. Thereafter, the seabirds were minimal, in what resembled a 'marine desert', with often several blank days in a row.

From 10 December, the presence of the cool and productive Benguela Current became apparent, and on 15 Dec seabird numbers began to increase. The first 'new' species on the 16th was a White-bellied Storm-petrel *Fregatta grallaria* in position 15.7°S 07.9°E, 290nm WNW C. Frio, followed by Antarctic Skua *Catharacta antarctica*. Over the next few weeks, until early January 1988, the number of seabirds varied according to the proximity to the African coast, with *Cayenne* on her very long tacks. Closer to Africa, but still over 100nm out, species included Yellow-nosed Albatross *Diomedea chlororhynchos* and White-chinned Petrel *Procellaria parkinsoni*, with Black-browed Albatross *D. melanophris* in smaller numbers. Also noted were Giant Petrel *Macronectes sp.*, an Atlantic Petrel *Pterodroma incerta*, and some Cape Gannets *Sula capensis*.

The crew were looking forward to the last section of the voyage, and an increase in seabirds, until disaster struck at 2100 on 13 January, when *Cayenne* was dismasted. The winds at the time were quite light, and it seemed that the cause was a rigging failure. A few days were spent putting up a 'jury rig', while the Benguela Current swept the boat north. Reaching Luderitz was now out of the question, and Walvis Bay it had to be: the alternative was the infamous 'skeleton coast', or Angola, which was in the midst of a war! They finally made land on 6 February, with Cape Cormorants *Phalacrocorax capensis* being a good indicator of an approaching shore, and *Cayenne* made it into Walvis Bay; the crew had been at sea for 104 days since leaving The Gambia.

But our problems were not over. I travelled north from Capetown, by car to join them, and was involved in a car crash in the Namibian desert, which resulted in a dislocated neck, and a six-week spell in hospital. As *Cayenne* was being prepared to be taken on a ferry to

Capetown, the crane dropped her too quickly onto her cradle, putting a hole in her side - trouble certainly appeared to come in threes!

### Around the Cape.

The repairs to *Cayenne* took longer than to my neck, and it was September before we were ready to proceed, but at least the region around Capetown was very good for birdwatching. 'Winter' visitors from the south, such as Antarctic Tern *Sterna vittata*, were seen, plus the usual endemics such as Hartlaub's Gull *Larus hartlaubi*, Bank Cormorant *P. neglectus*, Crowned Cormorant *P. coronatus*, and Jackass Penguin *Spheniscus demersus*. An unusual sighting was a Yellow-faced Shearbill *Chionis alba* seen on the rocky shore at the Cape of Good Hope itself. This was apparently one of a group that had hitched a lift on a ship bound for Capetown, and had left when land was sighted on the horizon. The remainder were caught on board, and eventually taken and released at Hout Bay Bird Sanctuary. It is interesting to speculate what would have happened if the entire group had flown ashore together, possibly to establish a colony in South Africa?!

On 24 September, over a year since leaving the UK, we finally set off around The Cape. For such a notorious area, the weather was kind to us. Seabirds became more apparent after we had rounded Cape Agulhas, the real southernmost cape of Africa. New species for the trip here included White-capped Albatross *D. cauta*, Soft-plumaged Petrel (of the Atlantic race) *Pterodroma mollis* and Pintado Petrel *Daption capense*. After a short stay at Mossel Bay, the original landing-point for Dias 500 years ago, we headed back to Capetown on the first leg of our return voyage. Seabird activity was quiet until we passed off C. Agulhas; just to the east we saw good numbers including over 1,000 Sooty Shearwaters, and 1,000 White-chinned Petrels and Great-winged Petrels *Pterodroma macroptera*, plus flocks of terns including Crested *S. bergii*, and Antarctic. At least 17 species were seen on 7 October. Total numbers were impressive (probably reaching 10,000), but some observers in this region have reported over 5,000 seabirds behind a single trawler! It was also good to see at least three species of albatross simultaneously.



White-chinned Petrels *Procellaria parkinsoni*, and a White-capped (or Shy) Albatross *Diomedea cauta* "shearing" in the wake

### Capetown to St. Helena (19 - 31 October 1988)

We reached Capetown on 8th, and spent 11 days preparing *Cayenne* for her homeward voyage. We then waited for suitable SE'ly winds, and left pm on 19th bound for St. Helena. We made good progress with the wind from astern, and well out to sea by next morning was very good for seabirds, with four species of albatross, including a single rare Royal Albatross *D. epomophora* of the race *sanfordi*; the position for this was 32.9°S 15.5°E, 70nm NW Cape Columbine. The Yellow-nosed Albatross was the most obvious in these waters, whereas the White-capped was dominant east of The Cape. The Black-browed was also more in evidence here.

On 21st a Black-bellied Storm-petrel *Fregatta tropica* was seen, (in position 32.2°S 13.6°E, 207nm off the mouth of Orange River) the first of several before reaching St. Helena, and a White-bellied Storm-petrel, and a stage 2/3 Wandering Albatross *D. exulans* on 22nd (in position 29.2°S 10.4°E). On 23rd, a juv. (light phase) Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus* was seen in position 28.2°S 09.0°E, close to Molloy seamount. Seabirds typical of the Benguela Current were now decreasing, as we crossed the Tropic of Capricorn on 25th. The last White-chinned Petrel was seen on 28th, and the sighting of two Brown Noddies *Anous minutus* indicated we were entering tropical waters. Two White-bellied Storm-petrels were seen again on the 29th. Increasing numbers of seabirds on 30th, including Black Noddies, White Terns *Gygis alba*, Madeiran and two more Black-bellied Storm-petrels, was evidence that St. Helena was close at hand, and the island appeared out of the haze, on the late afternoon of 31st: we had made the crossing in only 11 days - as quick as many a modern and faster yacht. Three Arctic Skuas (two dark, and one light phased) were seen in the lee of the island, as we approached, and also during our stay.

**St. Helena.** We spent 12 days (31 Oct-12 Nov), enjoying the hospitality of the islanders - the 'saints', most of whom had Polynesian-like features and olde-English accents! I managed to see the endemic St. Helena Plover *Charadrius sanctaehelenae*, and breeding seabirds such as Red-billed Tropicbird *Phaethon aethurus* and a possibly breeding Masked Booby *Sula dactylatra*; a single adult was seen on several occasions (31 Oct-1 Nov) flying near the cliffs of Jamestown harbour.

### St. Helena to The Gambia (via Ascension) (12 Nov - 8 Dec)

We sailed from Jamestown on 12th, with an excellent display of bioluminescence that night. Seabirds were few, mainly White-bellied Storm-petrels; numbers recorded were: one on 14th, three on 15th (12.0°S 07.7°W), two on 16th, two on 17th (10.0°S 10.0°W), three on 18th, and one within sight of Ascension on 19th. There were also a few Madeiran Storm-petrels, which appeared to be the typical storm-petrel of the tropical Atlantic, and a bonus of a Bulwer's Petrel on 17th. On 17th, with 295nm still to go to reach Ascension, we were 'inspected' by a stage-3 Ascension Island Frigatebird *Fregata aquila*, thrilling the crew with some incredible aerobatic manoeuvres. At about noon on 19th, at 8.4°S 13.1°W, when just south of Ascension, a single Arctic Tern

*S. paradisea*, in near-summer plumage, investigated us closely. We arrived off Ascension on 19th, and spent 20th sailing around the island, including a close look at Bo'sun's Bird Island, with its numerous breeding seabirds: Masked Boobies and the prehistoric-looking frigatebirds predominated. There were also a few Brown Boobies *S. leucogaster*.

We then headed NNW, seeing the last White-bellied Storm-petrel at 6.3°S 15.7°W on the 21st. From 22-27 Nov, as we crossed the equator, but still to the south of the doldrums, we encountered a major passage of birds moving south. On 23rd we saw the first two Cory's Shearwaters, and four Long-tailed Skuas at 02.8°S 17.9°W, but on 24th seabird numbers dramatically increased with 34+ Cory's, 145 Sooty Terns, and 4+ Arctic Skuas; our seabird count totalled 190. Crossing the equator at 19.8°W on 25th, saw a peak of at least 50 Cory's Shearwaters, a single Great Shearwater, an Arctic and a Pomarine Skua, and two unidentified skua sp. Numbers of Cory's were decreasing on 26-27th, whereas Great Shearwaters increased, with occasional Pomarine and Arctic Skuas, and Sooty Terns. Entering the doldrums on 28th, but still in the SE Tradewinds, at 05.8°N 21.7°W, we recorded Great Shearwaters (49), Bulwer's Petrels (3), and Black Terns *Chlidonias niger* (2). Also recorded throughout this period were small numbers of Madeiran, Wilson's and a few Leach's Storm-petrels.

After crossing the doldrums, the seabird passage was still in evidence, but on a reduced scale. Entering the NE Tradewinds at 21.7°N 21.8°W on 29 Nov, we saw Great Shearwaters (4 only), with Bulwer's Petrel (4), and Cory's (4). On 6 Dec we were on a more easterly course, heading for The Gambia, when a Gon-Gon 'sheared' past us, in position 14.1°N 20.0°W, 140nm from Cape Vert (Dakar). On 8th, the sea looked a very different murky green, as we approached the mouth of the Gambia river, and the area abounded with coastal species, notably Royal Terns *S. maxima*, with Caspian Terns *S. caspia* closer inshore.

### **The Cape Verdes (31 December 1988 - 3 February 1989)**

After Christmas, spent in The Gambia, and a chance to look at the excellent birdlife in the region, we sailed for the Cape Verdes, and spent five weeks exploring the extensive rugged and arid archipelago, whose colourful people reflect the influence of Africa, Portugal, and the Americas.

We made an anti-clockwise tour, starting and ending with the low-lying island of Sal. Being an extension of the Sahara, there is very little vegetation, and on one occasion we experienced the Harmattan, a wind from the Sahara, full of fine sand, which reduced the visibility to a sea-mist-like haze. The wildlife is often very sparse; even seabirds are uncommon away from their breeding sites. Red-billed Tropicbirds seemed typical of the very inaccessible cliffs, often with Brown Boobies which were also found on isolated islets. Off Boa Vista, on the islet known as Ilha Curral Velho, we were lucky to see a male Magnificent Frigatebird *F. magnificens*; this location is one of the few sites where it breeds in the eastern Atlantic. A few Madeiran Storm-petrels and Little Shearwaters were seen, and the unexpected sight of Egyptian Vultures *Neophron*

*percnopterus* along the lee coast of Santo Antao. Gon-gons were seen in small numbers, always to the windward of their breeding islands.

**Raso.** The highlight of our exploration here, was a visit to the small and isolated island of Raso - home to the endemic Raso Lark *Alauda razae*. Like the rest of the archipelago, Raso suffered in the drought of the 1970's, and the numbers of larks became dangerously low. Arriving off the lee of the island, we were 'boarded' by c.50 Iago Sparrows *Passer iagoensis*, landing on deck, on the rigging, and on us: these remained for the duration of our stay. It was a relief to find the Raso Lark in good numbers of 200+ (probably over 250). This may not sound many, but the species seems to be restricted to a plateau of sparse grass occupying less than half of the island with an area only one mile by three; this must be one of the smallest, and bleakest habitats for any bird species. Raso is also home to Ospreys *Pandion haliaetus*, and a number of breeding seabirds, whilst the surrounding waters abound with marine life, including corals. There are suggestions to make Raso the first National Park of the Cape Verdes, and since I found a strong environmental awareness amongst the islanders, there is every hope that this will be a success.

#### **Cape Verdes to Lisbon (4 - 28 February 1989)**

We had planned to cross into the temperate Atlantic in September '88, but after all the delays, we were approaching the region at the least favourable time of the year - late winter! We left the Cape Verdes on 2nd February. Our first very long tack took us almost to the Azores; we had expected to pick up some westerlies to take us to Lisbon, but the winds were unpredictable. It turned out that a big depression was developing, finally to become the 'lowest ever low' to pass over SSE England. When westerlies did form, we saw our first Kittiwakes *Rissa tridactyla* since leaving the NE Atlantic in 1987, on 13 Feb in position 32.2°N 26.4°W, about 300nm SSE Azores; they were in near-adult winter plumage. The welcome westerlies sped us towards Lisbon, but they also increased, developing into a severe gale on 25th, and continuing in strength so that we could not get into Lisbon pm on 27th. We saw a northerly passage of birds, including Northern Gannets *S. sula*, and Manx Shearwaters, close to the Portuguese coast, and managed to limp into Lisbon the next day.

#### **Lisbon to UK.**

After carrying out repairs due to storm-damage, we left Lisbon in mid-March. On the first part of the passage, seabirds were mainly in small numbers. Then, pm on 27th, a group of gulls and Gannets appeared, together with Swallows *Hirundo rustica*, and a variety of other landbirds. A Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*, and a Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* attempted to land on deck, both in an exhausted state. The reason soon became apparent; a severe storm, which seemed to appear out of nowhere, was rapidly bearing down on us. The winds and the waves soon hit us, and the two birds disappeared. Even as we reefed in, the wind increased from force 4 to force 7, in the opposite direction, finally reaching force 10. With the abrupt change in wind direction, the waves

were large and very steep, and we had only one choice - to run before the wind. This meant a hectic night on the helm, when several waves threatened to engulf *Cayenne*.

The winds had moderated by dawn, and at 45.8°N 10.6°W, the first sightings of Fulmars *Fulmarus glacialis*, since leaving the English Channel in August 1987, provided a welcome homecoming. We completed the crossing of the Bay of Biscay without problems, and finally made it into Falmouth on 2 April, and sailed the final leg in mid-April, up the English Channel, into the North Sea, and thence to Ipswich - after a very eventful expedition!

## CONCLUSIONS.

We had seen at least 83 species of seabirds, various landbirds at sea, and species endemic to Atlantic Islands. As the marine biologist on board, I was greatly impressed by the potential of the crew to make accurate observations at sea, and I conclude that the seafarer can indeed make a considerable contribution to ornithology. The ship's log provides a useful format for an onboard nature log, and with a round-the-clock watch rota on a small craft, there is a great potential to record observations of seabirds around the vessel. Yachtsmen often cross regions remote from the normal shipping lanes, and can thus help to increase our knowledge of the distribution of many seabird species. Finally, when passing remote islands, yachts can carry out basic surveys of various seabird species.

Ways need to be found to maximise this potential, and to involve yachtsmen, and other seafarers, to observe marine life - especially birds and cetaceans at sea. Quite often the interest is there, but help is needed both to aid identification, and to advise where to send the records achieved.

If the potential of the seafarer can be improved, this will make a significant contribution to our understanding of marine life, in their natural environment - the open oceans.

K.M. Morgan B.Sc., M.Sc., 64 Fairford Gardens, Worcester Park, Surrey KT4 7BJ.

**Comment by Editor.** RNBWS exists precisely to help in this way, for all birds seen at sea, which is why I am so pleased to include this article. Membership from all seafaring organisations, including yachtsmen, are welcome at any time. Just write to me! **M.B.C.**



## NOTES ON SEABIRD REPORTS RECEIVED IN 1989

By Captain N.G. Cheshire, M.N.

Fifteen observers sent in reports during 1989, including three new contributors:- A.P.Benson on HMS *Sheffield*, A.H.Todd on RFA *Orangeleaf* and W.J.Roberts. There was much of interest in the reports and all observers are thanked for their contributions.

The breakdown of observer effort into ocean areas was:- North Atlantic 30%, North Pacific 25%, Caribbean 13%, South Pacific 12%, South Atlantic 9%, Indian Ocean 9%, and Mediterranean 2%.

It would be helpful if census sheets were used where possible as these are easier to summarise and save paper. An alternative method of using the census sheet is to list the species by name across the top of the observation section at the head of vertical columns (about nine will fit in). Observations are recorded as usual across the page, only filling in numbers seen and code letters (see below). This avoids the repetitive listing of each species for every observation. It is particularly useful for a series of short observation periods with several species present.

Observers should for the time being continue to send their reports to Stephen Chapman.

ROYAL NAVAL BIRDWATCHING SOCIETY  
SEA BIRD CENSUS SHEET

Item No. \_\_\_\_\_

Ref. No.: 5/84

ACK: SEC 9.7.54

Plowed: 500 9.3.84

Year 1983

Observer (Caption)

NEW CHESHIRE

**POSTSCRIPT**

WILTSORE.

Voyage/Journee

ref. id: A65844

OK To

10 Ocean \_\_\_\_\_

NOTED

USA-TX

If a continuous period of observation is being reported, this form should be used in preference to the Sea Bird Raptor Sheet. It should provide information on the distribution of the sea birds within; recording every separate sighting to be entered individually. START A NEW SHEET FOR EACH NEW OCEAN OR NEW PORT. If birds are recorded for the same time, number, location, COUNT EVERY BIRD SEEN DURING A SPECIFIC PERIOD, AND RECORD TOTAL COUNT OF EACH SPECIES ALWAYS. P = Positive U = Uncertain. Additional code letters should be used to signify reports: A - Adults, I - Immature, S - Sexual, G - in groups, F - Flying, W - on water, F - feeding, M - in moult, N - notes on back. IMPORTANT - Sightings of species out of expected range, and unusual species must be supported with full descriptive notes.

[illegible]

## OBSERVERS SENDING NOTES DURING 1989

- R.C.L. Aran and J.P. Hargreaves and other Met. staff - OWS *Cumulus*. Multiple voyages between Greenock or Milford Haven and Ocean Station LIMA (57°N 20°W). April-December 1988 (6R-4C).
- MEM(1) A.P. Benson RN HMS *Sheffield*. Plymouth-Gibraltar-Madeira. October-November 1988 (4R).
- Chief Officer J.G.W. Dixon MV *Direct Kea*. Los Angeles-Melbourne, Auckland-San Francisco, Los Angeles-Auckland. November 1988-January 1989 (3R-4C).
- M.S. Dixon MV *Canada Marquis*. St. Lawrence-Philadelphia and return, Halifax-Great Lakes and return August to October 1989 (5C).
- Radio Officer M.G. Finn MV *Nosira Sharon*. Japan-W. Australia-Portland, Oregon-Brisbane March-May 1989; W. Australia-Sumatra. June-July 1989. MV *Spring Panda* Texas-Caribbean Ports and return, Panama-Guayaquil-Panama, Costa Rica-Wilmington-Costa Rica, Freeport-Honduras and return. September-November 1989 (13C).
- Chief Officer B. Grandin MV *Falstaff*. Around the world voyage, Gothenburg-Florida-Panama-W. Coast U.S.A. - Vancouver-Keelung (via Bering Sea)-Japan-Suez-Antwerp. November 1988-February 1989. MV *Traviata*. Around the world voyage - Sheerness-Baltimore-Houston-Panama-Los Angeles-Keelung-Japan-Suez-Antwerp. May-August 1989 (35C + route charts).
- Chief Officer M.C. Littlewood MV *London Spirit*. Montreal-Chesapeake-Curacao-Rotterdam-New York-Corpus Christi-Venezuela-Rouen-Caribbean-Holyrood, Newfoundland. November 1988-March 1989 (13C).
- Chief Officer A.R. Louch RRS *Charles Darwin*. San Diego-Panama-Woods Hole Mass. June-August 1989; Falklands-Scotia Sea-Bellinghausen Sea-Valparaiso. February-April 1989; Barry-Troon-N.E. Atlantic-Troon. September-November 1989 (22C-3B).
- Captain M.G.T. Harris RN. HMS *Ark Royal*. Suez-Singapore-Subic Bay-Hong Kong-Brisbane-Sydney-Fremantle-Bombay. July-November 1988 (8R-2B).
- Third Officer P.J. Neve MV *Canterbury Star*. Mediterranean-Costa Rica and return-South Africa-Europe. April-June 1988 (9R).
- W.J. Roberts *Texaco Westminster*, N. Atlantic April-May 1988 (1R-6P).
- M. Stannard RFA *Oakleaf*. Antigua-Nassau-Norfolk Va.-Miami-Tampa-Vera Cruz-Belize-Puerto Rico. November 1988-January 1989 (10R).
- A.H. Todd RFA *Orangeleaf*. Norwegian waters. March 1989 (2R).
- Bernard Watts SS *Canberra*. U.K.-Madeira-Port Everglades-Jamaica-Bonaire-Panama-Acapulco-Los Angeles-San Francisco-Hawaii-Auckland. January-February 1988 (13R).
- Captain R.L. Westwater MV *Sky Clipper*. Gothenburg-Cristobal and return, Cristobal-Bolivar-Cortes-Tripoli (Lebanon)-Port Said-Puerto Barrios. March-May 1989 (11R-33P).

R - RNBWS Report Sheets, C - RNBWS Census Sheets, B - RNBWS Bird-in-the-hand Forms, N - other notes, P - Photographs.

## NOTES ON SPECIES

### PENGUINS *SPHENISCIDAE*

Chinstrap Penguin *Pygoscelis antarctica*. ARL saw 'small flocks' at 65°S 68.5°W in the Bellinghausen Sea on 28 Mar 89.

### ALBATROSSES *DIOMEDEIDAE*

Wandering Albatross *Diomedea exulans*. Reported in small numbers from the Scotia Sea by ARL during Feb 89, with the most southerly record of three at 60.1°S 32.8°W on the 16th. ARL also saw three at 63.5°S 67°W in the Bellinghausen Sea on 24 Mar 89, six at 50.8°S 76.3°W off southern Chile on 5 Apr 89, and small numbers north to Concepcion, where his observations ceased. In Australian waters, MGTH recorded three off Jervis Bay at 35°S 152°E on 10 Oct 88, three in the Bight at 35.1°S 130°E on 19 Oct and several off south-western Australia including four at 34.5°S 114.5°E on 22 Oct 88.

Royal Albatross *Diomedea epomophora*. A single was identified by MGTH off south-western Australia at 35.2°S 115.9°E on 22 Oct 88. Short-tailed Albatross *Diomedea albatrus*. An interesting record from BG who described two seen on 7 Jan 89 at 25.7°N 123.5°E near Minami-Kojima NE of Taiwan where a small breeding colony survives, (Hasegawa 1982). One bird had almost obtained final stage plumage with 'a yellowish head and dark hind neck', while the other was a dark brown juvenile bird with a light-coloured bill.

Black-footed Albatross *Diomedea nigripes*. On passage from San Francisco to Hawaii, BW first saw this species at 31.5°N 136.3°W on 8 Feb 88 and then in small numbers until arrival on 11 Feb. Heading NE across the Pacific from Indonesia to Portland Oregon, MGF saw one at 24.1°N 169.9°E on 4 Apr 89, then others in small numbers daily until arrival, with a maximum count of 12 at 33.2°N 163.4°W on 8 Apr. On his return voyage to Brisbane, MGF saw the bird daily with a max. of six at 35.7°N 140.5°W on 8 May 89, with the last seen at 24.4°N 155.5°W on 10 May. On a voyage from Los Angeles to Taiwan, BG saw the first three at 36.7°N 135.5°W on 10 Jun 89, counted a max. of 25 in four hours at 40.4°N 152.7°W on 12 Jun (sea temp 14°C) and saw the last at 36.8°N 151.1°E east of Japan on 19 Jun. Off Baja California, BG saw a single at 25.2°N 113.4°W on 6 Jun 89 and another the next day at 28.3°N 115.9°W. ARL recorded three in the same area at 28.4°N 115.9°W on 20 Jun 89.

Laysan Albatross *Diomedea immutabilis*. Westbound from San Francisco to Hawaii, BW first saw one at 35.2°N 128.2°W on 7 Feb 88, then more daily until arrival on 11 Feb. He recorded five near the ship giving a high pitched 'whit-whit-whit' call. Heading NE across the Pacific, MGF saw his first Laysan at 28.3°N 179.6°E on 5 Apr 89, thereafter more in small numbers to 37.5°N 151.4°W on the 10th. He found one dead on board on 6 Apr, and noted the feet colour as 'very pale bluish grey'. On his return voyage Oregon to Brisbane in May, MGF recorded the species within the limits 38.9°N 134.5°W to 32.1°N 145.8°W. From Los Angeles to Taiwan BG had his first sighting, 20 birds, at 40.7°N

149.5°W on 12 Jun 89. he then saw moderate numbers to 35.5°N 147.4°E east of Japan on 19 Jun. His maximum count was 31 in three hours at 42°N 179.8°W on 15 June (sea temp 12°C). BG saw two at 53.4°N 175°W north of the Aleutians on 28 Dec 88, his only record while crossing the southern Bering Sea. In his distribution analysis of this species and the Black-footed Albatross based on eleven return trans-Pacific voyages, Kuroda (1988) found the Black-footed to have a more uniform and lower density pattern, whilst Laysan distribution was more concentrated and clumped particularly in the NW Pacific, east of S. Kuriles and in central convergent waters, possibly due to its preference for a squid diet. The Black-footed showed a preference for warmer water than the Laysan.

Black-browed Albatross *Diomedea melanophrys*. In the South Atlantic, ARL had many records south of the Antarctic Convergence during Feb/Mar 89. His more southerly records included four at 60.7°S 26.1°W on 18 Feb (sea temp 0.3°C), one at 60.9°S 27.5°W on 20 Feb (sea temp -0.5°C) and five at 60.3°S 37.7°W (sea temp -0.8°C). He also recorded four at 62.8°S 64.8°W in Drake Passage on 21 Mar and two in the Bellinghausen Sea at 64.7°S 68.6°W on 28 Mar. 89. Heading north off the coast of central Chile, ARL counted 54 in 30 minutes at 36.8°S 73.7°W on 9 Apr and a short time later saw c.700 behind a fishing vessel. There were also the usual reports of this species off southern Africa and southern Australia.

Grey-headed Albatross *Diomedea chrysostoma*. Small numbers were recorded by ARL in the Falklands-Scotia Sea, Bellinghausen Sea area during Feb/Mar 89. The most southerly record was one at 64.7°S 68.6°W (sea temp 2°C) on 28 Mar 89.

Yellow-nosed Albatross *Diomedea chlororhynchos*. In southern Australian waters, MGTH saw six immatures at 35°S 125°E on 20 Oct 88, an adult at 35.2°S 121.4°E the next day, and two at 34.5°S 114.5°E on 22 Oct 88.

Sooty Albatross *Phoebastria fusca*. The Met. observers on MV *Abbey* described five seen at 30°S 74.5°E in the South Indian Ocean on 11 Jul 88.

Light-mantled Sooty Albatross *Phoebastria palpebrata*. Seen by ARL in the Falklands-Scotia Sea area, Feb/Mar 89, 52°S to 61°S, 26°W to 55°W. One was seen by the Met. observers on MV *Abbey* at 38°S 135.9°E in the Great Australian Bight on 28 Jun 88.

## FULMARS, PRIONS, PETRELS AND SHEARWATERS

### PROCELLARIIDAE

Giant Petrel *Macronectes* Spp. On his way south from Fiji to Auckland, BW saw three at 33°S 176°E on 20 Feb 88.

Northern Giant Petrel *Macronectes halli*. MGTH tentatively identified three birds as *halli* at 37.2°S 150.2°E off southern NSW on 12 Oct 88.

Northern Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*. Recorded by BG on most days between Vancouver and northern Japan via the Bering Sea in Dec 88/Jan 89. He had a maximum of 200, of which all but two were dark phase birds, at 47.2°N 152.7°E east of the Kuril Is., in association with fishing

boats on 1 Jan 89. BG also saw 19 at 39.3°N 160°E in the NW Pacific on 18 Jun 89. There are many records from the normal range in the North Atlantic. MSD saw 10 near the western end of Anticosti I. in the Gulf of St. Lawrence on 30 Oct 89.

Southern Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*. Many records from ARL during the period Feb-Apr 89 from 26°W in the Southern Ocean west to the Bellinghausen Sea including c. 100 counted in 30 min. at 60.3°S 27°W south of South Sandwich Is. on 17 Feb, 25 at 60.9°S 27.4°W on 20 Feb, 15 at 62.7°S 64°W on 29 Mar, and one at 55.1°S 74.7°W off southern Chile on 4 Apr.

Snow Petrel *Pagodroma nivea*. Several records from ARL from south of the Antarctic Convergence - one at 60.1°S 32.8°W on 16 Feb 89, two the next day at 60.3°S 27°W and one at 60.6°S 26.1°W on 18 Feb. He also saw one near the Antarctic Peninsula at 62.3°S 63.5°W on 30 Mar.

Blue Petrel *Halobaena caerulea*. Recorded by ARL during Mar-Apr 89 with one at 59.8°S 40.9°W on 7 Mar, one at 61.1°S 65.8°W in Drake Passage on 19 Mar, three at 63.5°S 67°W on 24 Mar, three in the Bellinghausen Sea on 28 Mar, and a single off southern Chile at 55.1°S 74.8°W on 4 Apr.

Antarctic Petrel *Thalassoica antarctica*. ARL had three attracted to his ship's working lights at 61.1°S 25.4°W on 21 Feb 89.

Great-winged Petrel *Pterodroma macroptera*. There were several tentative records from ARL from well south in the Atlantic sector of the Southern Ocean. These were single birds at 53.7°S 44.8°W on 12 Feb 89, 57.8°S 39.5°W on 23 Feb and 62.1°S 67.1°W on 31 Mar (sea temp. range 4.8° to 2.1°C). They were described as larger than Kerguelen Petrels with blacker less reflective plumage and a stubby black bill. Their flight was rapid and soaring but less wild than Kerguelen Petrel.

Black-capped Petrel *Pterodroma hasitata*. BG recorded 16, singly and in groups at 33.5°N 76.2°W on the shelfbreak SSW of Cape Hatteras on 24 May 89. He described their upperparts as 'brown with a broad white collar and much white at the base of the tail'. The next day he saw one at 29.8°N 78.4°W east of Florida. PJN reported several at 18.2°N 68.1°W in the Mona Passage on 8 May 88.

Tahiti Petrel *Pterodroma rostrata*. Two birds were described by BG from the eastern tropical Pacific at 13°N 93.5°W on 3 Jun 89.

Mottled Petrel *Pterodroma inexpectata*. Recorded from the North Pacific by BG while on passage from Los Angeles to Taiwan, the first being at 41.1°N 158.9°W on 13 Jun 89, then daily in small numbers to 39.3°N 160°E on 18 Jun where he had a maximum count of 10.

Kerguelen Petrel *Pterodroma brevirostris*. Several records of single birds by ARL between 60.6°S 26.1°W and 64.6°S 68.6°W, south of the Antarctic Convergence during Feb-Mar 89.

Soft-plumaged Petrel *Pterodroma mollis*. PJN reported one off Cape Beddouza, Morocco on 27 May 88. APB described and sketched two birds he saw closely, when six miles off Madeira on 21 Oct 88. These

had a whitish forehead and eyestripe, dark crown and ear coverts, a blackish partial breast band and white flanks. The two species/sub species breeding in the Madeira area, *P. (m) madeirae* and *P. (m) feae* have been reviewed by Zino and Zino (1986). ARL had several records from 52°S-56.7°S, 42°-56°W east of the Falklands during Feb-Mar 89 (minimum sea temp. 3.5°C) with a maximum of 12 at 51.5°S 46.9°W on 1 Mar 89.

White-necked Petrel *Pterodroma externa*. In the eastern tropical Pacific, ARL described one seen at 11.6°N 100.7°W on 25 Jun 89 and 47 including a flock of 35 at 09.6°N 96.6°W the next day. They were clearly distinguished from Hawaiian Petrel by pattern and extent of black on the head.

Bonin Petrel *Pterodroma hypoleuca*. In the NW Pacific, BG described 20 seen at 35.5°N 147.3°E on 19 Jun 89, and counted 50 in 42 miles at 33.9°N 143.3°E the next day.

Stejneger's Petrel *Pterodroma longirostris*. Several were tentatively identified each day by ARL off southern Chile between 50.8°S 76.3°W and 36.8°S 73.7°W from 5 to 9 Apr 89.

Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulwerii*. An interesting record from the eastern Indian Ocean, where five birds came aboard HMS *Sirius* (CMEM(L) Galloway per MGTH) at 14°S 97°E, south of the Cocos/Keeling Is. and stayed on the ship for 3-4 days (6-10 Nov 88) to 01.5°S 85.8°E. Recently there have been many sight records off NW Australia. Should any come aboard here, a detailed Bird-in-the-Hand form with careful measurements would be particularly welcome.

Jouanin's Petrel *Bulweria fallax*. BG reported possible birds at 09.7°N 62.7°E in the Arabian Sea on 20 Jul 89, and three more at 11.9°N 52.1°E off Cape Guardafui on 22 Jul 89.

Grey Petrel *Procellaria cinerea*. Four were seen by ARL on 11 Mar 88 at 53.5°S 47.8°W between the Falklands and South Georgia.

White-chinned Petrel *Procellaria aequinoctialis*. Many records from ARL in the S.Georgia-Falklands-Drake Passage Area from Feb-Apr 89 including 15 at 59.5°S 36.5°W on 15 Feb, 14 at 60.6°S 31.5°W on 19 Feb and one at 61.1°S 65.5°W on 19 Mar. He also saw six off the coast of Chile at 48.65°S 76°W on 6 Apr 89 and seven at 36.7°S 73.7°W on 9 Apr. In Australian waters, MGTH recorded a 'few' at 35.5°S 116.9°E in the south west on 22 Oct 88, also the Met. observers aboard MV *Abbey* reported one at 38.5°S 140°E west of Bass Strait. The last observers remarked that the white chin was not evident or difficult to see. Most White-chinned Petrels in Australasian seas have a very small area of white chin that is difficult to distinguish from the whitish bill except at very close range.

Black or Parkinson's Petrel *Procellaria parkinsoni*. One possible sighting from BG from the eastern tropical Pacific at 07.9°N 83.3°W on 2 Jun 89.

Streaked Shearwater *Calonectris leucomelas*. Wintering birds were recorded in the South China Sea by BG who saw nine at 14.3°N 115.3°E and 150 at 11.9°N 113°E on 25 Jan 89. He described their calls as 'a raspy barking sound'. In their NW Pacific breeding area, BG on passage

from Los Angeles to Taiwan, saw the first, c.50 at 33.9°N 143.3°E on 20 Jun 89. He saw another 50 at 30.1°N 129.4°E off southern Japan on 24 Jun, 25 the next day at 32.8°N 132°E and 50 at 25.7°N 125.2°E in the East China Sea on 22 June.



White-chinned Petrel *Procellaria aequinoctialis*.  
SE of Tasmania, December 1988

Photo: Captain Neil Cheshire, MN

Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea*. Numerous records from the North Atlantic and a few from the Mediterranean. BG recorded an overwintering or early returning bird off Cape Trafalgar, Straits of Gibraltar, on 12 Feb 89. RLW saw seven at 34°N 41°W on 6 Mar 89 and 'hundreds' around the Azores on 22 Mar 89. On voyage from Venezuela to Rouen MCL saw small numbers from 25.3°N 51.6°W on 15 Mar 89 to the Azores, where he counted 450 in an hour at 38.1°N 27.8°W on 19 Mar; many Common Dolphins *Delphinus delphis* were also seen here. MSD saw two at 39.4°N 70.8°W off east coast USA on 8 Sep 89. BG recorded two at 41.3°N 26.2°W on 24 Nov 88. The migration of Cory's Shearwater has recently been discussed by Mougin *et al* (1988), who give evidence for a separate migration regime for the three subspecies, with the Mediterranean breeding *C.d. diomedea* wintering off southern Africa, *C.d. borealis* of the Azores, Madeira and Canary Is, wintering off Brazil and Argentina and *C.d. edwardsii* of the Cape Verdes less migratory and staying in the eastern central Atlantic.

Pink-footed Shearwater *Puffinus creatopus*. BW reported one at 10.8°N 87.6°W on 28 Jan 88. BG saw substantial numbers between Panama and Manzanillo, Mexico during December 88 including 400 at 08°N 83.3°W, 1000 at 08.4°N 84°W, 50 at 09°N 7°W and 110 at 10.2°N 86.3°W on the 8th, 100 at 13.5°N 91.4°W, several hundred at 14.2°N 92.2°W, 2000 at 14.6°N 93.3°W on the 9th, and 10 at 19°N 104.3°W on 11 Dec 88. He mentioned there was a large individual variation in underwing colour, however most showed greyish axillaries and greater

coverts, whitish centre, broad dark margins and a dark outer wing. The species was clearly distinguished from the pale morph Wedge-tailed Shearwaters which also occur here. When passing through the same area in June 89 BG recorded occasional birds, with one at 13°N 95.5°W on the 3rd, five at 15.6°N 98.7°W the next day, three at 18.7°N 104.8°W on the 5th and a single at 23°N 111.1°W on 6th.

Pale (or Flesh-footed) Shearwater *Puffinus carneipes*. MGF reported 50 at 22.7°S 113.3°E off Western Australia on 15 Mar 89 and 'flocks' the next day at 28.1°S 113.2°E. One was reported by MGTH off Socotra on 10 Jul 88.

Great Shearwater *Puffinus gravis*. There were many records from the North Atlantic. Those of note: RLW saw 60 at 22°N 56°W on 17 May 89, BG counted 128 in four hours at 42.1°N 50°W on 19 May 89, MSD had six at 43.4°N 62.9°W south of Nova Scotia on 10 Sep 89. BG also had several late records with one at 41.2°N 26.2°W, four at 41°N 27.6°W on 24 Nov 88, and one at 37.6°N 39.2°W on 26 Nov 88. In the Falklands and South Georgia area, ARL had several records including four at 53.7°S 44.8°W south of the Antarctic Convergence on 12 Feb 89 (sea temp. 4.8°C), 11 at 54.4°S 49.8°W on 25 Feb 89 and 32 at 53°S 51.2°W on 12 Mar 89.

Wedge-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus pacificus*. BW reported a pale morph bird at 24°N 151.9°W on 10 Feb 89 and a feeding flock of 80+ dark birds at 16°S 178°W NW of Fiji on 16 Feb 88. A flock of 50 was seen by JGWD at 03.3°S 163.1°W near the Phoenix Is. on 28 Nov 88 and 40 nearby at 04.5°S 164.3°W the same day. BG recorded six at 18.6°N 120.2°E NW of Luzon on 11 Jul 89 and 150 at 13.1°N 113.7°E in the South China Sea the next day. In the Indian Ocean MGTH reported 60+ possibles at 05.7°N 80.1°E south of Sri Lanka on 17 Jul 88.

Buller's Shearwater *Puffinus bulleri*. In the north-west Pacific, BG saw one at 37.2°N 154.6°E on 18 Jun 89, another at 36.8°N 151.6°E and five at 35.5°N 147.4°E the next day. The tail end of the southward trans-Pacific migration was seen by JGWD who recorded three at 13°N 146.5°W on 25 Nov 88, 20 at 03.3°S 163.1°W on 28 Nov 88, and three the following day at 08.9°S 168.6°W. On the 5 Dec 88 he also reported three at 34.8°S 158°E in the Tasman Sea, where it is rarely seen west of 165°E.

Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus*. BG saw two at 37.5°N 74.6°W on the shelfbreak approaching Chesapeake Bay on 22 May 89. There are several autumn records from ARL from the north of the species' range in the Atlantic - five at 60.7°N 09.7°W on 4 Oct 89, small numbers 60°-61°N, 09.7°-07.9°W from 6-14 Oct 89 and a single at 61.3°N 09°W on 2 Nov 89. APB saw one at 24.8°N 19.5°W off Mauretania on 29 Oct 89. In the North Pacific when on passage from Los Angeles to Taiwan, BG reported this species or the similar Short-tailed Shearwater, seeing the first four at 35.3°N 126°W on 9 Jun 89 thereafter almost daily until 19 Jun at 35.5°N 147.4°E east of Japan and a record of c.5000 at 41.2°N 160.2°W on 13 June. He mentioned the birds were in worn and faded plumage, with moulting flight feathers and had difficulty taking off as his ship approached.





Short-tailed Shearwaters *Puffinus tenuirostris*  
off Unimak Passage, NE Pacific, June 1986

Photo: 2/O B. Grandin, Sw. MN

Christmas Shearwater *Puffinus nativitatus*. A single bird was described by BW from 02.7°N 168.9°W on 14 Feb 88. He noted the uniform chocolate-brown plumage and its smaller size and faster wingbeat compared to Wedge-tailed Shearwater.

Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus*. Many records from the normal North Atlantic range.

Fluttering Shearwater *Puffinus gavia*. A 'few' reported by MGTH off south-western Australia at 35.5°S 116.9°E on 22 Oct 88.

Black-vented Shearwater *Puffinus opisthomelas*. A single was reported by BW at 07.1°N 81°W off Pacific coast of Panama on 27 Jan 88, another two days later at 14.1°N 94.3°W and six at 28.6°N 115°W on 2 Feb 88. BG reported one at 18.7°N 104.7°W on 5 Jun 89. He also saw 100 at 18.9°N 104.6°W on 11 Dec 88 and 'several thousands' at 28°N 115.4°W off Baja California on 13 Dec 88.

Townsend's Shearwater *Puffinus auricularis*. Two were reported by BG at 18.7°N 104.7°E off Mexico on 5 Jun 89, though confusion with Black-vented is also possible.

Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis*. BG gave a full description of a single bird seen at 31.2°N 67°W, SW from Bermuda on 30 Nov 88. He mentions the fast wing beat and the 'white-faced' effect. A summary of records from the western North Atlantic (16-20 acceptable during last 100 years), and information on identification has recently been published by Lee (1988).

Audubon's Shearwater *Puffinus l'herminieri*. In the Atlantic, a northerly record from ARL of four birds from Gulf Stream waters at 39.2°N 71.1°W (sea temp 26.1°C) on 6 May 89. BG saw a single bird in the Gulf Stream at 33.5°N 76.2°W (sea temp 25°C) on 24 May 89. Six were reported from well offshore at 22°N 56°W on 17 May 89 (RLW). Caribbean sightings include 300 counted by RLW in 80nm at 17.6°N 64.5°W S. of the Virgin Is. on 18 May 89. MCL had 17 'possibles' at 14.1°N 78.4°W on 17 Nov 89. In the Indian Ocean, BG reported five at 11.9°N 52.1°E off Cape Guardafui on 22 Jul 89. MGTH saw a 'possible' bird at 5.7°N 80.1°E south of Sri Lanka on 17 Jul 89. He also reported two possibles at 14.2°S 144.5°E inside the Great Barrier Reef, however confusion with Fluttering or Hutton's Shearwater is possible here.

### STORM-PETRELS HYDROBATIDAE

Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanicus oceanites*. There were several reports from the normal North Atlantic range. APB provided a description and sketch of seven seen closely in calm weather at 24.8°N 19.5°W off Mauretania on 29 Oct 88. ARL had many records from the Atlantic sector of the Southern Ocean 52°S-65°S, 26°W-69°W during Feb-Mar 89. He also saw 11 at 36.7°S 73.7°W off Chile on 9 Apr 89. In the eastern tropical Pacific, ARL reported 165 in an hour including a flock of 150 at 02.7°N 79°W on 9 Jul 89, however confusion with the Madeiran Storm-petrel is possible in this area.

White-faced Storm-petrel *Pelagodroma marina*. The Met. observers aboard MV *Abbey* described one that came aboard at 30°S 72°E in the South Indian Ocean on 12 Jul 88.

Black-bellied Storm-petrel *Fregetta tropica*. Many records from ARL from the Atlantic sector of the Southern Ocean west to the Bellinghausen Sea 53°S-65°S, 26°W-70°W, Feb-Apr 89, with a maximum count of 10 at 53.7°S 44.8°W on 12 Feb 89.

Least Storm-petrel *Halocryptena microstoma*. BG saw 10 at 18.9°N 104.6°W on 11 Dec 88. He describes the flight as 'very quick and fluttering with rather deep wing beats'. Six possibles were described by ARL at 28.4°N 115.9°W off Baja California on 20 Jun 89.

Galapagos (or Wedge-rumped) Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma tethys*. BG described one seen at 19°N 104.8°W off Mexico on 11 Dec 88, and a possible was reported by ARL from 06.7°N 78.2°W near the Columbian coast on 17 Jul 89.

Madeiran Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma castro*. MGF found one aboard his ship at 01.6°N 80°W in the eastern Pacific on 8 Oct 89. He mentioned the 'square-cut' white rump and the black legs and feet.

Leach's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*. In the Pacific area, BW had several aboard his ship, the first at 14.1°N 94.3°W near Guatemala on 29 Jan 88, two at 24°N 151.9°W north-east from Hawaii on 10 Feb 88 and another in the central Pacific at 02.6°N 168.9°W on 14 Feb 88. Also in the Pacific, BG reported seven at 39.3°N 159.7°W on 18 Jun 89 and three at 36.8°N 150.8°E the next day. JGWD saw two at 18.4°N

140.9°W on 24 Nov 88 and four at 00.4°N 152.8°W on 14 Jan 89. Several records from the North Atlantic including 17 seen by BG at 43.5°N 45.8°W on 19 May 89.

Swinhoe's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma monorhis* / Matsudaira's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma matsudairae*. On passage from Tokyo to Western Australia. MGF reported several sightings of 'Swinhoe's': six at 27°N 137°E on 5 Mar 89, two at 21.7°N 134.8°E the next day and one at 16.3°N 132.7°E on 7 Mar 89. These were following his ship and were described as all brown with light brown/whitish greater coverts and had forked tails. It is likely there was confusion with Matsudaira's Storm-petrel which breeds nearby in the Bonin Group and is more inclined to follow ships.

Black Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma melania*. Three possibles were described by ARL at 28.4°N 115.°W off Baja California on 20 Jun 89 and he also identified five at 05.5°N 88.4°W on 28 Jun 89. BG reported 10 at 13.5°N 91.5°W on 9 Dec 88. There is possible confusion with the similar Markham's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma markhami* in this region.

Fork-tailed Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma furcata*. Two were reported by BG at 52.1°N 161.8°E east of Kamchatka on 31 Dec 88. He also recorded two at 41°N 158.9°W on 13 Jun 89.

### TROPICBIRDS PHAETHONTIDAE

Red-billed Tropicbird *Phaethon aethereus*. Several records from the eastern tropical and sub-tropical Pacific. BW saw one at 14.1°N 94.3°W on 29 Jan 88 and two at 28.5°S 115°W on 2 Feb 88. ARL had one at 12.3°N 102.5°W on 25 Jun 89, another at 02.7°N 79°W on 9 Jul 89 and one at 04.4°N 78.2°W on 14 Jul 89.

Red-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon rubricauda*. One was seen by BW at 23.2°S 177.2°E west of Tonga on 19 Feb 88. MGF had one aboard which regurgitated two small squid at 09.9°S 123.2°E west of Timor on 12 Mar 89.

White-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon lepturus*. In the Atlantic, RLW saw one well offshore at 28°N 59°W on 4 Mar 89. PJN had one circling his ship at 03.9°N 12.1°W off Liberia on 31 May 88. MCL saw one in the Sombrero Passage at 18.7°N 63°W on 13 Mar 89. In the North Pacific, MGF saw two at 28.2°N 151°W on 9 May 89, and JGWD had a single at 13°N 146.5°W on 25 Nov 88. Further south in the area of the Tongan Group, JGWD saw one at 16.3°S 175.3°W on 30 Nov 89 and another at 21.6°S 172.2°W on 18 Jan 89.

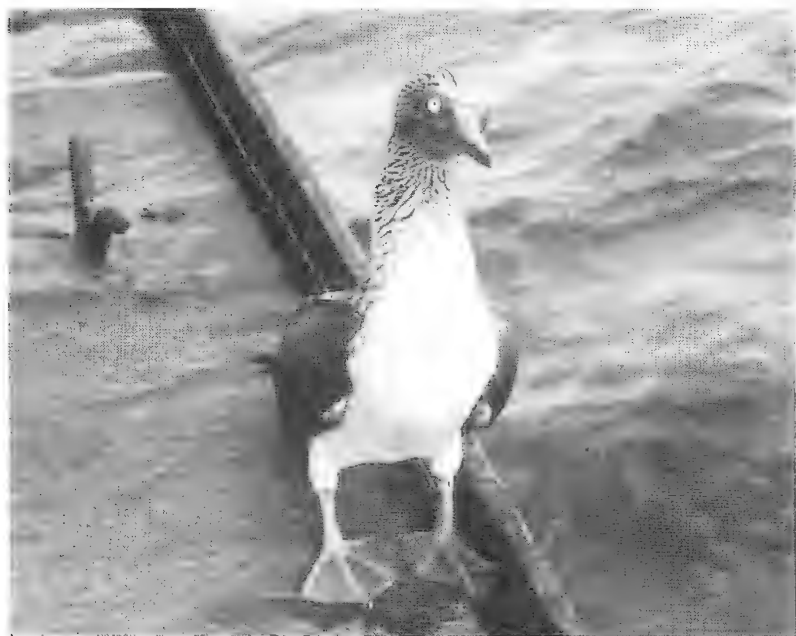
### PELICANS PELICANIDAE

Brown Pelicans *Pelecanus occidentalis*. In the Caribbean, MCL saw 36 at 10.7°N 61.8°W off Pt. Penas, Venezuela on 18 Feb 89.

### GANNETS AND BOOBIES SULIDAE

Northern Gannet *Sula bassana*. Many records from the eastern North Atlantic, including several immature birds seen by PJN in western approaches to Straits of Gibraltar on 16 May 88. BG saw 100 near a fishing

vessel at the shelfedge at 49.7°N 09.1°W on 15 May 89 and one adult at 41.3°N 26.2°W north-east of the Azores on 24 Nov 88. In the western North Atlantic, MCL saw five adults and one immature at the edge of the Gulf Stream at 39.2°N 72.6°W on 13 Feb 89. MS saw two adults and a second-year bird at 36.6°N 75.5°W off Norfolk Va. on 23 Nov 88. Masked Booby *Sula dactylatra*. Many records from the normal tropical range. Larger concentrations included 50 counted by BG in 40 miles at 14.1°N 92.2°W off Guatemala on 9 Dec 88, and 10 seen by JGWD at 07.7°N 151.9°E in the central Pacific on 26 Nov 88. MCL saw several large flocks, total 500+ birds in 37 miles at 10.7°N 65.8°W when approaching Puerto la Cruz, Venezuela on 8 Dec 89. In the southern Red Sea, two were seen by MGTH at 15°N 42°E on 7 Jul 88. Red-footed Booby *Sula sula*. Many records from throughout the tropics. In the Caribbean area, RLW recorded 40 at 17.6°N 64.5°W south of the Virgin Is. on 18 May 89, MCL saw 50 at 14.7°N 69.7°W on 14 Nov 88, and BG saw 15 at 18.7°N 74.7°W west of Haiti on 5 Dec 88. In the eastern Pacific, BG saw c.50 at 15.6°N 98.7°W on 4 Jun 89 in an area where there were many dolphins. ARL had five roosting aboard his ship at 09.6°N 96.6°W on 26 Jun 89. In the central Pacific JGWD recorded them as 'numerous' when passing Christmas Island on 27 Nov 88. MGF had three immatures roosting on his ship overnight at 20.5°N



Blue-footed Booby *Sula nebouxi*,  
Gulf of Guayaquil, E Pacific, 3 July 1989

Photo: Chief Officer P.W.F. Morana, MN

160°W near Hawaii on 11 May 89. At daylight they used the ship as a diving platform to catch flying fish disturbed by the bow wave. There were records from the South China Sea by BG who saw one at 11.9°N 113°E on 25 Jan 89 and MGTH who saw three at 16.5°N 113.2°E on 29 Aug 88.

Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster*. PJN recorded 'several' including immatures at 26.8°N 14.4°W off southern Morocco on 28 May. In the Caribbean, BW saw 25 off St. Lucia on 13 Jan 88. MLC saw 80 in company with Sooty Terns feeding over a fish shoal at 17.7°N 64.1°W off St. Croix on 13 Mar 89, a feeding flock of 70 at 17.4°N 67.6°W near Puerto Rico on 11 Nov 88, and counted 200+ adults and immatures in 37 miles approaching Puerto la Cruz Venezuela on 8 Dec 88. In the Pacific, BG counted 244 of the pale-headed race *brewsteri* in 32 miles at 18.7°N 104.7°W off Mexico on 5 Jun 89. In the South Pacific, JGWD saw 20 when 8 miles south of Norfolk Island on 4 Dec 88. In the Indian Ocean, MGF saw six at 09.6°S 123.4°E on 24 Mar 89. BG saw a large flock of 300 flying away from Peak Island at 15°N 42.1°E, in the southern Red Sea on 5 Feb 89.

#### **CORMORANTS PHALACROCORACIDAE**

Double-crested Cormorant *Phalacrocorax auritus*. Three were seen by MSD at 48.4°N 62.5°W in the Gulf of St. Lawrence on 25 Aug 89.

#### **FRIGATEBIRDS FREGATIDAE**

Christmas Frigatebird *Fregata andrewsi*. MGF saw four at 13.3°S 107.4°E SE of Christmas Island on 1 Jul 89, and 10 possibles at 04.2°S



Immature Ascension Frigatebird *Fregata aquila*,  
Ascension, March 1990

Photo: W.R.P. Bourne



Christmas Frigatebird *Fregata andrewsi*,  
near Christmas I., October 1987

Photo: Captain Neil Cheshire, MN

107.2°E in the Java Sea on 3 Jul 89. The range of this species has not been clearly established, and well-documented records away from Christmas Island would be particularly interesting. Both adults are distinctive; the male has a diagnostic white belly patch and the female has a 'cleanly cut' black shoulder spur extending into the white of the breast and axillaries.

Magnificent Frigatebird *Fregata magnificens*. Many records from the known range on both coasts of Central America. It was seen north to 24.5°N off Baja California by BW on 1 Feb 88 and c.280 in three large flocks were seen by BG at 24°N 111.3°W on 12 Dec 88. In the Caribbean, MCL saw 14 at 14.2°N 66.8°W on 13 Jan 89, and RLW observed 30 in 80 miles south of the Virgin Is., c.17.6°N 64.5°W on 18 May 89.

Great Frigatebird *Fregata minor*. BW saw five near the Pacific coast of Panama at 07.1°N 80°W on 27 Jan 88. MGTH reported 30 possibles at 06.4°N 95°E north of Sumatra on 20 Jul 88.

Lesser Frigatebird *Fregata ariel*. In the South Pacific, BW reported three with a flock of Wedge-tailed Shearwaters at 13.7°S 177°W west of Samoa on 16 Feb 88. MGTH saw six at 10.7°S 131.9°E in the Arafura Sea on 15 Sep 88.

#### PHALAROPES PHALAROPODIDAE

Grey (or Red) Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius*. Along the Pacific coast of Central America, BW reported 'hundreds' at 07.1°N 81°W on 27 Jan 88, saw two closely at 10.8°N 87.6°W the next day, and another four at 19°N 104.3°W on 31 Jan 88. BG reported 300 at 13.5°N 91.3°W on 9 Dec 88 and 30 at 16°N 97.7°W the next day. In the Atlantic, there were reports of three at 43.5°N 45.8°W by BG on 19 May 89 and two at 43.5°N 12.1°W by APB on 15 Oct 88.

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*. Several records from eastern Canadian waters from MSD who saw six at 48.1°N 68.9°W in the lower St. Lawrence on 24 Aug 89, these were feeding on what appeared to be floating 'algae'. He also saw two at 45.7°N 60°W near Cape Breton Island on 26 Aug 89 and one at 47.3°N 60.1°W in Cabot St. on 30 Sep 89.

Phalarope Sp. *Phalaropus* sp. BG saw 11 in mid-Atlantic at 38.6°N 32.9°W on 25 Nov 88.

### **SHEATHBILLS CHIONIDIDAE**

Yellow-faced (Snowy or American) Sheathbill *Chionis alba*. ARL had one that attempted to land on his ship at 58.3°S 69.9°W in Drake Passage on 3 Apr 89.

### **SKUAS AND JAEGERES STERCORARIIDAE**

Great Skua *Catharacta skua*. BG saw one off C. Trafalgar on 12 Feb 89, another at 47.6°N 05.9°W in the Bay of Biscay on 14 Feb 89 and two more at 48.4°N 05.3°W off Ushant the same day. MCL recorded two at 38.1°N 27.8°W near the Azores on 19 Mar 89 and RLW saw two nearby at 38.6°N 29°W on 22 Mar 89. Six were seen by MCL at 48.2°N 07.3°W in the Western Approaches on 22 Mar 89. BG saw four at 48.1°N 08.2°W on 22 Nov 88, and one of these had moulted the greater secondary coverts and showed a white band along the base of the secondaries.

Antarctic (Southern or Brown) Skua *Catharacta (s) antarctica*. In South African waters, PJN had five around his ship throughout the day, 'buzzing' the bridge wings and perching on masts at 34.8°S 21.5°W on 7 Jun 88. MGTH saw one at 12.8°S 94.5°E about 140nm WSW of the Cocos/Keeling Is. on 7 Nov 88.

South Polar Skua *Catharacta maccormicki*. BG reported a possible at 09°N 84.7°W off Costa Rica on 8 Dec 88. It was larger than the Pink-footed Shearwater it was chasing, and was a dark bird with a light hind neck and base of tail. Observers should note that Harrison (1987) is incorrect in stating that the Southern Skua *C. antarctica* lacks the pale nuchal collar, whereas in fact many breeding in the New Zealand area have distinctive pale napes. The dark form of the South Polar Skua *C. maccormicki* cannot be identified by this feature alone.

Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus*. Many records from the wintering areas in the tropical and sub-tropical Atlantic and Pacific. In the Caribbean, eight were seen by MCL at 11.1°N 64.5°W off Venezuela on 22 Feb 89. MS had seven around his ship for several hours at 24.8°N 84.3°W in the Gulf of Mexico on 17 Dec 88. He found by making a 'clucking' sound he was able to attract them to within a few feet. North Atlantic records included two in full plumage seen by APB at 38.3°N 12.3°W on 16 Oct 88 and another at 34.8°N 11°W off Morocco on 1 Nov 88. One was seen by BG at 30.7°N 75°W over Gulf Stream waters on 1 Dec 88. In the Pacific Ocean, BW saw seven at 07.1°N 81°W on 27 Jan 88 and three in Honolulu Hr. on 11 Feb 88. Substantial numbers



White-eyed (or Red Sea Black-headed) Gull *Larus leucophthalmus*,  
off Jeddah, Red Sea, May 1989

Photo: Captain R.L. Westwater, MN

Winner of Sea Swallow Photographic Competition 1989

were recorded by BG off Central America during Dec 88 with a maximum count of 75 in 45 miles at 13.5°N 91.3°W on the 9th. He also recorded small numbers of non-breeding or immature birds in the same area during June 89. In the South China sea, BG reported one at 11.9°N 113°E on 25 Jan 89 and two at 18.6°N 120.2°E NW of Luzon on 11 Jul 89.

Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus*. BW reported a dark bird at 22.6°N 78.1°W west of the Bahamas on 19 Jan 88. BG saw three at Suez inner anchorage on 26 Jul 89 - an unusual record at this time of the year.

Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus*. In the North Atlantic, an adult was seen by the Met. ship observers at 56.5°N 16.2°W on 13 May 88. BG saw six at 43.5°N 45°W on 19 May 89 and one later the same day at 42.8°N 47.7°W. He also reported the species from the North Pacific, seeing one at 42.1°N 174°W on 14 Jun 89, five at 41.7°N 175.2°E the next day, and a single at 35.5°N 147.4°E on 19 Jun 89.

#### GULLS LARIDAE

Sooty (or Aden) Gull *Larus hemprichi*. One possible was reported by MGTH at 15°N 42°E in the southern Red Sea on 7 Jul 88 and BG saw five nearby at 13.8°N 42.9°E on 23 Jul 89.

Japanese Gull *Larus crassirostris*. A flock of 50 was seen by BG at 35.1°N 131.2°E when approaching Tsushima Strait on 4 Jan 89.



Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*. MSD saw three at 49.3°N 65.6°W in the Gulf of St. Lawrence on 29 Sep 89. There were two records from well offshore by MS who saw three adults at 32.5°N 76.7°W, 140 miles off Charleston on 24 Nov 88, and had a single stay for three hours around his drifting ship at 24.3°N 67.3°W, some 390 miles from Puerto Rico on 6 Dec 88.

Common or Mew Gull *Larus canus*. In the eastern Pacific, BW saw 12 near the southern limit of their range at 28.6°N 115°W off Baja California on 2 Feb 88.

Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*. A bird of the NW European race *L.a. argentatus* was identified among 200 of the local race *L.a. atlantis* by BW at Madeira on 8 Jan 88. MCL saw two at 30.9°N 61°W, 240 miles NE of Bermuda on 14 Feb 89.

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*. Eight of the British race *L.f. graellsii* were seen by BW and fellow observers at Madeira on 8 Jan 88. BG reported two wintering birds at 11.9°N 51.8°E near C. Guardafui on 3 Feb 89, and another at 12.3°N 46.9°E in the Gulf of Aden the next day.



Red-legged Kittiwake *Larus brevirostris*  
off Unimak Passage, NE Pacific, June 1986

Photo: 2/O B. Grandin, Sw. MN

Slaty-backed Gull *Larus schistisagus*. Seen by BG from east of the Kuril Is. to northern Japan with 'several hundreds' at 47.2°N 152.7°E on 1 Jan 89, 'several hundreds' the next day at 43.6°N 147°E and 25 at 40.3°N 138.9°E on 3 Jan 89.

Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus*. One adult was seen by AHT at 69.9°N 15.6°E west of Tromsø on 10 Mar 89. MCL saw three immatures at 47.6°N 52.5°W off St. Johns, Newfoundland on 18 Dec 88. In the Pacific BG saw three at 51.9°N 161°E near Kamchatka on 31 Dec 88, 25 the next day at 47.2°N 152.7°E and 10 at 43.6°N 147°E on 2 Jan 89.

Iceland Gull *Larus leucopterus*. Several reports from Canadian waters by MSD who saw one at 49.3°N 66.1°W in the lower St. Lawrence on 22 Oct 89, two more the next day at 47.3°N 60.1°W in Cabot St. and two near the western end of Anticosti Island on 30 Oct 89.

Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla*. MS saw two immatures at 26.7°N 83.5°W, 65nm from the Florida coast on 19 Dec 88.

Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*. BW saw 100 immatures in Madeira Hr. on 8 Jan 88 and BW saw two at 44.2°N 19°W on 23 Nov 88.

Indian Black-headed (Brown-headed) Gull *Larus brunnicephalus*. See "Bombay Notes 1990" p70-72 below.

Bonaparte's Gull *Larus philadelphia*. A report of 70+ at 23.1°N 110.3°W off Baja California on 1 Feb 88 (BW).

Common (or Black-legged) Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*. Many reports from the North Atlantic including 30 seen by MCL at 38.1°N 27.8°W near the Azores on 20 Jan 89.

Swallow-tailed Gull *Larus fuscatus*. One adult was described by ARL from 02.7°N 81.7°W west from Colombia near the NE limit of normal oceanic range on 30 Jun 89.

Sabine's Gull *Xema sabini*. RLW saw two in the North Atlantic at 53°N 22°W on 2 May 89. In the eastern Pacific, BG saw birds as follows:- one at 16°N 97.7°W, another at 16.3°N 99°W on 10 Dec 88 and one at 23.2°N 110.4°W on 12 Dec 88.

## TERNs STERNIDAE

Black Tern *Chelidonias nigra*. Several records of wintering flocks off the west coast of Central America including c.1000 seen by BG at 08.5°N 84°W on 8 Dec 88. He also saw 100 at 13.6°N 91.3°W on 9 Dec 88, 500-1000 at 14.6°N 93.3°W the same day and 50 at 19°N 104.6°W on 11 Dec. In the same area 'hundreds' were seen by BW at 14.1°N 94.3°W off Guatemala on 29 Jan 88.

Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia*. MCL described one seen well off-shore at 20.1°N 92.6°W in the southern Gulf of Mexico on 22 Nov 88.

Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea*. Eight possibles reported by BG from the North Atlantic at 43.5°N 45.8°W on 19 May 89.

Black-naped Tern *Sterna sumatrana*. JGWD recorded 22 when 10nm west of Samoa on 30 Nov 88.

Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus*. RLW counted 20 in 80 miles at c.17.6°N 64.5°W south of the Virgin Is on 18 May 89. In the Gulf of Aden, BG saw eight at 12.4°N 45°E on 23 Jul 89.

Sooty Tern *Sterna fuscata*. There were many records from tropical seas around the world. MCL recorded a flock of 170 at 17.7°N 64.1°W near St. Croix on 13 Mar 89, and nearby RLW saw a flock of 200 over a shoal of fish at 17.6°N 64.5°W on 18 May 89. In the East China Sea, 15 were seen by BG at 25.7°N 125.2°E on 22 Jun 89. He also saw 60 at 09.6°N 61.9°E in the north Indian Ocean on 2 Feb 89.

Least Tern *Sterna antillarum*. One report from BW of four at 07.1°N 81°W off Panama on 27 Jan 88.

Blue-grey Noddy *Procelsterna cerulea*. JGWD described one seen at 19.6°S 178.8°W south of the Fiji Group on 1 Dec 88 and reported another, eight miles south of Norfolk Island on 4 Dec 88.

White Tern *Gygis alba*. MGF found one dead on board at 00.1°N 126.7°E in the Molucca Sea on 10 Mar 89. He mentions the feather-shafts were brown, the legs and feet black, and the bill purple at the base with the outer half black. In the Pacific, BW saw birds at 05.4°S 173.1°W on 15 Feb 88 and four at 13.7°S 177°W the next day. Further SW, JGWD saw one at 28.7°S 169°E, and another at 31°S 165°E on 4 Dec 88.

#### SKIMMERS RYNCHOPIDAE

Black Skimmer *Rynchops nigra*. One was seen by BW in Acapulco Bay on 30 Jan 88.

#### AUKS ALCIDAE

Little Auk *Plautus alle*. AHT tentatively identified five seen at 63.2°N 07.3°E of Kristiansand on 2 Mar 89. MCL counted 25 at 47.6°N 52.5°W off St. Johns, Newfoundland on 18 Dec 88.

Cassin's Auklet *Ptychoramphus aleuticus*. BW found one aboard at 35.2°N 128.2°W in the eastern North Pacific on 7 Feb 88.

Tufted Puffin *Lunda cirrhata*. Several records from BG, who saw two at 54.8°N 138.8°W off west coast of Canada on 24 Dec 88, one at 54.4°N 160.2°W south of Alaska on 26 Dec 88 and singles in the Bering Sea at 53.4°N 171°E and 52.1°N 161.8°E on the 29 and 31 Dec 88. He also saw two near the Kuril Is. at 47.2°N 152.7°E on 1 Jan 89. MGF saw two at 41.7°N 139.1°W on 12 Apr 89.

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# SEABIRDS EXAMINED IN THE HAND 1982-1988

Compiled by Dr W. R. P. Bourne

Species	Observer	Date	Position	Sea Temp. °C	Length mm	Wingspan mm	Notes (* - photo)
Antarctic Petrel <i>Thalassidroma antarctica</i>	A. R. Louch	ca28.2.85	ca63.6°S 41.3°W	0.3°	390	880	Found dead 3.3.89
Kerguelen Petrel <i>Pterodroma brevirostris</i>	A. R. Louch	25.3.85	61.9°S 37.2°W	0.2°	350	740	Two, 210 'E Laurie Id
(Narrow-billed?) Prion <i>Pachyptila (belcheri?)</i>	A. R. Louch	19.3.85	61.0S 27.2°W	0.6°	260	'	110' 110° S Thule
White-chinned Petrel <i>Procellaria aequinoctialis</i>	P. D. Williams	ca21.4.85	54°S 36.5°W		5250	12170	2, lights, Grytviken
Wedge-tailed Shearwater <i>Puffinus pacificus</i>	B. D. Mullen	8.7.85	25°N 123.3°E	28°	330	850	Dark*, 70'E N Taiwan
(Wedge-tailed?) Shearwater <i>Puffinus pacificus?</i>	A. R. Louch	17.5.88	19.0°S 176.2°W	27.3°	439	110	Dark (or Christmas S.?)
White-faced Storm-petrel <i>Pelagodroma marina</i>	R. J. Tucker	16.9.88	38.5°S 150°E	14.7°	200	390	50' off Victoria
Brush Storm-petrel <i>Hydrobatas pelagicus</i>	A. R. Louch	20.9.84	41.5°N 13.5°W	21.0°	145	220	WSW C. Finisterre
Leach's Storm-petrel <i>Oceanodroma leucorhoa</i>	A. R. Louch	30.11.83	0.2°N 17.1°W	24.9°	182	312	Several on board
	A. R. Louch	1.12.83	0.1N 17.1°W	24.9°	168	310	Oiled
	J. W. Welch	3.10.86	43.6°N 38.3°W	18.2°	ca200	440	Oil: 2 others seen
	R. L. Westwater	8.10.86	37°N 35.3°W	22.8°	185	360	? imm.*
	R. L. Westwater	8.10.86	37°N 35.3°W	22.8°	190	460	? ad.*
	M. C. Littlewood	26.3.87	1.1°S 0.2°E	28.7°	195	420	
	M. C. Littlewood	31.3.87	6.8°S 10.6°E	29°	187	400	65' off Luanda
	M. G. Weir	17.8.87	ca48°N 61°W	16.2°	218	472	32' SW Anticosti Id.
	Williamson	16.1.88	34°N 37°W	20.0°	180	315	
(Common?) Diving-petrel <i>Pelecanoides turmatris?</i>	A. R. Louch	10.1.87	49.7°S 43.4°E	6.7	175	280	Dirty white u'wing
Brown Pelican <i>Pelecanus occidentalis</i>	Williamson	15.2.88	0.4°S 91.2°W	27°			
Lesser Crested Tern <i>Sterna bengalensis</i>	C. M. Patrick	22.8.88	25.0°N 54.8°E	34°	403	941	Oiled, died*
Sooty Tern <i>Sterna fuscata</i>	P. C. Dyer	22.2.85	7°S 106°E	24°	330	830	Imm, 3° S Java
Little Auk <i>Alle alle</i>	A. R. Louch	27.4.83	51.1°S 12.9°W	11.7°	210	200	Mlt. head, hole 1 web*
Crested Auklet <i>Aethia cristatella</i>	B. Grandin	4.1.87	53.9°N 174.0°W		238		Winter male, dead

Previous summaries of records of birds examined in the hand are given in

Sea Swallow 13: 16, 14: 26, 15: 27, 16: 39, 17: 12-13, 18: 14, 19: 53, 20: 55, 22: opposite 32 and 33, 24: 70-71, 31: 31-32.

## LANDBIRDS FROM SHIPS AT SEA, 1989

Analysis by Commander M.B. Casement, Royal Navy

The following landbird report sheets (numbers shown in brackets) were received during the last year. Extracts are shown in the appropriate geographical sections using the observer's initials:

- MEM A.P. Benson RN, HMS *Sheffield*. 16 Mar-24 Oct '89 - Baltic, E. Atlantic, Med, Gulf of Aden and Persian Gulf (3).
- Captain N.G. Cheshire MN, RV *Franklin*. 5 Apr, 8 Jul and 13 Oct '88, and 15 Sep '89. Arafura Sea, Coral Sea and Tasman Sea (2).
- R.M. Curber, MV *Alexa*. 3-10 Sep '89 - UK to Capetown - E. Atlantic (3).
- M.S. Dixon MV *Canada Marquis*. 25 Aug, 30 Sep and 22-29 Oct '89 - W. Atlantic (2).
- Captain P.C. Dyer MN, MV *Shetland Service*. 17-24 Oct '88, 8-11 Apr '89 - Fulmar Oilfield, North Sea (2).
- Radio Officer M.G. Finn MN, MV *Spring Panda*. 4-11 Mar - Japan to Australia (1); 11-30 Sep, 11-24 Oct, and 2-16 Nov '89 - Gulf of Mexico (4).
- Chief Officer B. Grandin Sw. MN, MV *Falstaff*. Nov '88-Feb '89 - Round the world voyage - UK-USA-Japan-Belgium (4); MV *Traviata* May-Jun '89 - UK-USA-Japan (6); 7-26 Nov '89 - Med-Red Sea-Persian Gulf (3).
- Chief Officer M.C. Littlewood MN, MT *London Spirit*. Feb '89 - W. Atlantic, Caribbean (1); Mar '89 - Gulf of Mexico, Caribbean (8+3 BEH forms and photos); 13-25 Aug '89 - Caribbean, 26 Oct - 18 Nov '89 - W. Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico (computer printout, 2 BEH + photos).
- Captain D. Lloyd and 2/O B. Tasker MN, MV *West Moor*. 20 Apr-13 Jun '89 - S. Atlantic (1).
- Chief Officer A.R. Louch MN, RRS *Charles Darwin*. Apr '89 - SE Pacific (1); Jul-Aug '89 - NE Pacific (1); 26 Sep-18 Nov '89 - N. Atlantic (2 + 1 BEH).
- Naval Airman (Met) C. Patrick RN, HMS *Herald*. Sept-Nov '88 - Persian Gulf (2); 3-27 Mar '89 - Red Sea and Med (1). Norwegian Sea Sep/Oct '89 (3 BEH).
- A.H. Todd, RFA *Orangeleaf*. 2-11 Mar '89 - Norwegian Sea (2).
- B.R.H. Watts, SS *Canberra*. 17 Mar '88 - Gulf of Thailand (1); 7-14 Apr '88 - Med and E. Atlantic (2).
- Chief Officer M.G. Weir MN, MV *Canmar Ambassador*. 6-21 Jun - N. Atlantic (1).
- Captain R.L. Westwater MN, MV *Sky Clipper*. 21 Apr-13 May '89 - E. Atlantic, Med and Red Sea (3).

Also included are a number of interesting extracts from ship's Meteorological Logs, thanks to Captain M.L.M. (Mike) Coombs of the Met. Office, Bracknell, and Captain Peter Chilman who handles the seabird records from this valuable source; these are indicated by the notation (Met).

The analysis is presented in the same geographical sections A to J as in past years. The notation (BEH) indicates bird examined in the hand form.

### SECTION A - EAST ATLANTIC (EAST OF 30°W), and NORWEGIAN SEA

1988

On 13 Sep MV *Asifi* (Met) reported a flight of probable Pink-backed Pelicans *Pelecanus rubescens* heading south in position 19.7°N 17.8°W, 65nm west of Mauritania. An unidentified heron *Ardea* sp. was aboard on 14th at 15.2°N 17.9°W and departed during the night.

22-24 Nov BG recorded a number of late migrants far from land including a Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* and Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* (3) on 22nd when 240nm SW Seillies (47.3°N 10.6°W); winds were easterly force 4-5. On 23rd, when 560nm SW C. Clear, Ireland, (44.2°N 19.0°W) two Starlings and a Song Thrush *Turdus merula* were aboard, and two Starlings on 24th when 140nm north of the Azores (41.3°N 26.4°W).

#### 1989

On 7 Jan MV *Act 7* (Met) reported a probable Grey-headed Kingfisher *Halcyon leucophala* aboard 02.6°N 11.7°W, 180nm SW Liberia. Also noted were a number of dragonflies and other insects blown aboard by persistent N/NE winds.

On 12 Feb BG saw a Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* (M) aboard briefly, and two Swifts *Apus* sp. when 30nm SW Cadiz (36.2°N 6.6°W.)

On 2 Mar MV *Jasmine B* (Met) recorded three Pied Wagtails *Motacilla alba* aboard when 280nm NW off Madeira, 35.1°N 20.9°W. On 25 Mar numerous 'swallows or swifts' were noted around dusk at 36.5°N 13.5°W.

In the Norwegian Sea 2-11 Mar, AHT recorded a flock of 20 Eider *Somateria molissima*, and Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis* (2M + 1F) on 3rd, close inshore at 66.2°N 13.0°E, and a Gyrfalcon *Falco rusticolis* (juv. dark phase) followed the ship closely for 10 mins on 5th, when 15nm off land in Andfjord, 69.4°N 16.3°E. When anchored in Gullsfjord pm, a group of three White-tailed Eagles *Haliaeetus albicilla* overflew the ship. At least two (possibly three) White-tailed Eagles were noted in Altenfjord (70.1°N 23.3°E), on 11 Mar, also Eider (35), Hooded Crow *Corvus corone* (6), and a possible Gyrfalcon (or Peregrine), was seen briefly.

On 7 Mar MV *Craiglas* (Met) recorded a House Martin *Delichon urbica* 150nm SW Canary Is., 26.6°N 20.3°W.

On 26 Mar MV *Hawk Arrow* (Met), photographed a Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*, found in the (empty) swimming pool, when 30nm W, Ushant (48.5°N 5.6°W). It revived in the Master's cabin, but died 28th.

RLW recorded a Plain Swift *Apus unicolor* on 13 May, seen approaching from south when 195nm WSW Madeira.

On 15 May BG saw two Turtle Doves *Streptopelia turtur* aboard when 150nm SSW C. Clear, Ireland; they were still there next morning when 300nm SW Ireland (49.7°N 13.7°W). Winds were southerly F3-4.

On 22 May APB recorded a Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra* aboard when 70nm NW Gibraltar, and a House Martin which was picked up on the flight deck, but subsequently died.

On 13 Jun DL & BT noted a House Martin in position 29.7°N 14.9°W, 55nm NW Lanzarote, Canary Is.

On 21 Jun MGW recorded a Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* aboard 3 hrs, when 100nm west of Ireland (51.3°N 13.0°W).

At 2000 on 11 Aug an Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* came aboard MV *Asifi Zlang 6* (Met) in position 25.0°N 17.0°W, 100nm west of Mauretania and 170nm south of Canary Is. It seemed uninterested in a number of swifts/martins flying around, and departed next morning, heading for the Mauretanian coast, then 60nm distant.

On 4 Sep RMC saw a Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* catch a small moth or butterfly, and a juv. Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca* aboard in the Bay of Biscay, and when 90nm west of Portugal on 5th recorded a Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*, a Pied Flycatcher and at least three Turtle Doves; the winds were strong NE, decreasing. When 200nm NW Morocco (34.4°N 12.9°W) on 6th, numbers of Turtle Doves increased to at least seven and 1-2 *flava* Wagtails were seen circling, but did not land. Also aboard were Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* (1), Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*, Garden Warbler *S. borin* and Willow Warblers (5). A Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* landed aboard at 27.5°N 15.5°W, 30nm S, Canary Is. am on 7th, and remained until 8th when it disappeared 40nm SW C. Blanco (20.4°N 17.6°W). A group of six Grey Herons was seen astern, flying high in single file, on a southerly course, when 90nm S, Canary Is. An unidentified falcon was also seen briefly. On 9th, when 18nm off Dakar, a Swallow *Hirundo rustica* was seen briefly, and numbers of Turtle Doves varied from one to seven. Winds were light offshore, bringing sand and numerous grasshoppers and other insects. A Hoopoe *Upupa epops* was seen flying astern, and two Turtle Doves were aboard on 10th at 6.9°N 14.6°W, 100nm SW Sierra Leone.

Four Grey Herons were photographed aboard MV *British Skill* (Met) on 10 Sep in position 07.6°N 19.7°W, 360nm west of Bijouga Is, Africa.

Four Grey Herons were photographed aboard MV *Nickerie* (Met) on 11 Sep, when 200nm WNW Lisbon (40.4°N 13.2°W). They remained for two hours.

On 26 Sep a Robin *Erithacus rubecula* came aboard MV *Liverpool Star* (Met) in the Bay of Biscay, and remained until 30 Sep, in the central Med, where it survived an attack by an unidentified hawk.

On 26 Sep ARL noted four Snow Buntings *Plectrophenax nivalis* being mobbed by an Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus* in position 52.2°N 25.4°W, 660nm WSW Ireland; the wind was WNW/5.

On 27 Sep CP recorded a Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis* which arrived in an exhausted state, during poor visibility and drizzle, in position 57.3°N 04.1°E, 90nm SW Norway. It subsequently died and was examined (BEH).

On 28 Sep a large owl, possibly a Long-eared Owl *Asio otus* was aboard MV *Sumburgh Head* (Met) in the Bay of Biscay (44.6°N 8.4°W) for about 15 mins.

On passage from Plymouth, (UK) to Santander (N. Spain) 1-2 Oct, Dr J.D. Parrack, recorded a large number and variety of landbirds - see article page 61.

On 3 Oct ARL recorded a Grey Heron (probably juvenile) which arrived aboard near Rockall, 240nm west of Hebrides; the prevailing winds for the previous three days had been mainly moderate SE'ly. It refused the food offered (finely minced meat and oats!), but did take some water. Its long sharp beak deterred the crew's attempts to force-feed it. On 9th it made a bid for freedom, but returned, and again on 10th when 30nm SW Faeroes and clearly visible, but was viciously mobbed by a large flock of Kittiwakes and Fulmars. It was forced into the water, and subsequently died. On 5 Oct a Starling was seen trying to land aboard during heavy rain, and squally SE winds (force 6-7), when 44nm SW Faeroes.

On 10 Oct a Merlin *Falco columbarius* landed aboard MV *Sumburgh Head* (Met) in position 47.1°N 10.1°W, 250nm SW Ushant, and pursued two Swallows for about 30 mins, before heading off towards a fishing vessel.

During the period 10 Oct to 18 Nov, ARL was operating in an area SW of the Faeroes and recorded a Redwing *Turdus iliacus* which arrived at dawn at 61.6°N 8.6°W, and a Wheatear (F) on 11th, when 37nm west of Faeroes. Two Mistle Thrushes *T. viscivorus* were sighted circling in position 60.2°N 9.4°W, 130nm SW Faeroes. A Snow Bunting (M) arrived at dawn on 22 Oct in position 61.3°N 8.2°W, and three Starlings arrived early am on 29th. Four Starlings and a Redwing were seen early am on 30th, and a probable Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola* was seen briefly flying SW pm. on 31st when 50nm N. Faeroes (63.1°N 01.5°W). A Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima* arrived in an exhausted state am on 3 Nov, when 40nm SSW Mykines I., Faeroes, but was found dead on 4th. A Redwing was seen circling on 13 Nov, and four more arrived overnight on 18th when in position 61.4°N 8.2°W.

On 21 Oct CP reported a Blackcap (first winter F), which came aboard during poor vis and rain in position 68.5°N 08.5°W, 130nm south of Jan Mayen. It was caught and examined (BEH), but was active and strong, and departed am 25th, heading south. Also on 21st several Fieldfares *Turdus pilaris* arrived at 2230, and one was caught and examined (BEH). They departed 2300 on 22nd.

On 26 Oct MCL photographed a female Wheatear aboard at 48.6°N 19.2°W, 510nm WNW Finisterre.



Female Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*, 26 Oct '89

Photo: Chief Officer M. C. Littlewood, M.N.

On 7 Nov two probable Lanner Falcons *Falco naumanni* arrived aboard MV *Asifi Zdan* (Met) 80nm west of Senegal (16.6°N 18.0°W), and remained for 48 hrs. The wind was from offshore (050/4) bringing a number of locusts, which the falcons caught and ate on the wing.

On 29 Nov MV *West Moor* (Met) recorded four Grey Herons, aboard at 9.2°N 17.2°W, 140nm SW Bijagos Is., and a Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* which circled and landed briefly.

## SECTION B - ENGLISH CHANNEL, NORTH SEA AND BALTIC

### 1988

PCD recorded the following near Fulmar Alpha platform, 56.5°N 02.1°E on 17 Oct: Goldercrest *Regulus regulus* (20+), Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla* (20+), which arrived early am from NE during fog and strong SE winds force 6. 12 Goldercrests were caught and examined, and given water, but none survived. One male Brambling was caught and examined. Also seen was a Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, and a Redwing *Turdus iliacus* was found inside the accommodation on 18th, but fell into the sea when released. On 24 Oct two Goldercrests were caught on the bridge wing, and a Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* was also seen briefly; the visibility was poor, and winds NE/3.

### 1989

On 12 Mar MV *Shetland Service* (Met) recorded a Goldercrest aboard in Fulmar oilfield, and on 28th the following arrived aboard during fog: Blackbird *Turdus merula*, Robin *Erithacus rubecula*, Wren, a Goldercrest and a Linnet *Acanthis cannabina*. The wind was NW/2 with poor visibility, rain and fog patches. A warbler, which later died and was identified as a Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*, was aboard on 13 Apr.

In the Baltic, APB was in an area 20nm west of Liepaja (54.5°N 15.3°E), 16-21 Mar, and recorded: Great Tit *Parus major* (5 aboard all day on 16th); on 20th Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* (3+4+1 - flying N), Great Tit (c.40 arriving from E and heading N), Blue Tit *Parus caeruleus* (2 singing from mainmast), Jackdaw *Corvus monedula* (1 flying E), Skylark *Alauda arvensis* (92+1 flying E), Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* (2 flying E), and a Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*, which swooped into hangar and straight out again, heading eastwards low over the sea; on 21st, Chaffinch (9 flying N), Great Tit (c10 aboard), Blue Tit (2 aboard), Skylark (18 flying N).

On 30 Mar MV *Telnes* (Met) identified a Long-eared Owl *Asio otus* which circled and finally landed aboard off Foulness I., 52.6°N 01.8°E.

On 8 Apr PCD recorded the following at Fulmar Alpha: Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* aboard 2 hrs, Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba*, and a Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*. A Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* circled the platform briefly on 10th and departed SE, and a probable Dunlin *Calidris alpina* was seen on deck am on 11th.

On 16 Apr MV *Stability* (Met) recorded a number of species including two Bullfinches *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* (one died) and three Goldercrests, in position 54.0°N 4.3°E, 35nm NW Terchelling.

On 21 May MV *Shetland Service* (Met) identified three White-fronted Geese *Anser albifrons* in Fulmar Oilfield. Two landed briefly on ship's afterdeck and then rejoined the third in the sea. Winds were E/3. On 6 Jun a possible juv. Peregrine *Falco peregrinus* was aboard briefly at dusk, having arrived from south and departed north towards Fulmar platform. Whilst engaged in towing operations on 19 Jun, a Curlew *Numenius arquata* maintained a precarious perch on the tow-rope for five mins. A Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* was aboard for 20 mins before departing south on 27 Jun.

On 20 Aug MV *Shetland Service* (Met), in Fulmar Oilfield, recorded two Common Sandpipers *Tringa hypoleucos* and a Redshank *T. totanus*, and during heavy overcast skies on 21st a number of other species were seen, including Linnet, and Pied Wagtail.

On 29 Dec MV *Shetland Service* (Met), noted a number of small groups of Fieldfares *Turdus pilaris*.



## SECTION C - WEST ATLANTIC (WEST OF 30° W)

1989

On 6 Jun MGW recorded a Common Yellowthroat *Geothlypis trichas* (F), when 10nm south of St. Pierre (46.5°N 55.6°W, and two probable Least Flycatchers *Empidonax minimus*, a Yellow Warbler *Dendroica petechia*, and two Common Redpolls *Acanthis flammea* (M+F), when 290nm east of St. Johns, Newfoundland (48.2°N 46.9°W).

A probable Peregrine *Falco peregrinus* was sighted aboard MV *Geesthaven* (Met) at 1000 4 Sep in position 34.2°N 38.2°W, 600nm SW Azores, and remained for about 24 hours. A red ring was visible on its right leg.

MCL found a female Redstart *Setophaga ruticilla* aboard on 14 Aug, when 30.1°N 70.8°W, 335nm WSW Bermuda. It was in an exhausted state and died after 10 mins. Weather was overcast with heavy rain and winds SW/4-5.

On 29 Sep ARL recorded a possible Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* skulking under deck equipment in position 52.7°N 35.1°W, 700nm E. St. John's, Newfoundland. It was very small, brown, with an upturned tail and 'flickering' flight. The vessel had been on a westerly course for the previous four days, and winds had been southerly/variable and squally force 5-8.

On 7 Oct MV *Nickerie* (Met) photographed a Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* which flew round the ship for 15 minutes attempting to land. The weather was fine and clear, wind SE/force 3-4, landed aboard, after several attempts, and remained for 15 minutes. The position was 35.3°N 30.4°W, 220nm SSW Azores.

MSD recorded a Yellow-rumped Warbler *Dendroica coronata* aboard in the Gulf of St. Lawrence (48.5°N 62.5°W) on 25 Aug, and a Pine Siskin *Carduelis pinus* in the Cabot Strait (46.2°N 59.7°W) on 30 Sep, and a Northern Junco *Junco hyemalis* in a similar position on 23 Oct. A Peregrine was aboard, on 28 Oct, and 15 White-winged Crossbills *Loxia leucoptera* off Halifax, Nova Scotia on 28 Oct.

MCL observed two Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* am on 3 Nov make several attempts to land aboard at 37.9°N 69.1°W, 315nm SSE Nantucket, and a Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* pm, when 220nm NE Cape Hatteras; winds were WNW/7, with overcast skies. Four Starlings were found aboard next morning. On 4 Nov a number of migrants were aboard when 135nm SE Cape Hatteras including: Nashville Warbler *Vermivora ruficapilla* (2), probable Blackpoll Warbler *Dendroica striata* (2), Catbird *Dumetella carolinensis*, and a Mourning Dove *Zenaidura macroura*.

## SECTION D - GULF OF MEXICO AND CARIBBEAN

1988

BG noted a late swallow *Hirundo* sp. on 5 Dec when 70nm SSE Jamaica, at 15.6°N 76.4°W, and another swallow and a Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* when 160nm N. Panama, 12.3°N 78.3°W.

1989

On 18 Feb MCL reported an Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* which came aboard 30mins before sunrise in position 10.7°N 61.7°W, 80nm NNE Venezuela. It remained overnight, and caught a fish which it ate on the mainmast before departing about noon/19th. Another Osprey came aboard just after sunset on 24 Feb at 13.7°N 71.1°W, 80nm NNE Venezuela and stayed overnight.

On 28 Feb MCL recorded a Yellow Rail *Coturnicops noveboracensis* found skulking on deck when 224nm south of Louisiana, 25.5°N 91.3°W.

On 2 Mar MCL recorded a Bank Swallow *Riparia riparia* and a Cattle Egret when 11nm east of Port Aransas, Texas.

In the central Gulf, on 6 Mar MCL recorded a Semipalmated Plover *Calidris pusilla* at 1320, a Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia* at 1518, and a Killdeer *C. vociferus* at 1720, and an unidentified pipit. The position was 25.6°N 91.9°W, 225nm SW Mississippi Delta; winds were NW/6 and skies overcast.

On 4 Mar an unusual bird, subsequently identified by Peter Colston of the British Museum (BMNH) as a Gray-capped Cuckoo *Coccyzus landsbergi*, was photographed aboard MV *English Star* (Met), aboard for nearly 2 hours when about 100nm north of the Columbian coast. (See *The Marine Observer* 60 No. 308: 67, 72.)

On 8 Mar MCL saw a Green Heron *Butorides striatus* aboard one hour when 40nm south of Little Cayman I. An Osprey attempted to land aboard at 1725, and a Great Egret *Casmerodius albus* was aboard two hours when 135nm SSE Jamaica on 9th.

On 21 Apr MV *Garth* (Met) recorded a number of Barn Swallows *H. rustica* perching aboard, up to five together, when south of Cuba, 21.3°N 64.0°W.

On 27 Apr MV *Nosira Madeline* (Met) was approaching the Yucatan Channel and recorded a group of three Cattle Egrets, and eight Barn Swallows aboard. On 28th a Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* and a Purple Gallinule *Porphyryla martinica* were sighted aboard.

BG noted the following Cattle Egrets in May: am. 26 May (2) - 100nm SW C. Sable (24.7°N 88.5°W), and a group of 14 pm. which landed aboard for two hours when 200nm SW Florida; am. 27 May (3) aboard two hours when 150nm south of Louisiana, a single in breeding plumage circling at 1400, and another aboard 1800-2000 when 110nm S. Louisiana, 28.0°N 93.0°W. Two Barn Swallows were aboard for at least 4 hrs on 26th, and another pm. on 27th, and also a sub-adult Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* was seen circling for 30 mins. A single Cattle Egret circled briefly at 0600 on 30th, when 40nm SW Cuba, 21.3°N 85.3°W, and another was flying low eastwards at 1000.

On 13 Aug MCL recorded a probable Short-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus griseus* flying past NNW, at 19.4°N 68.1°W, 75nm NNE Dominican Republic, and a Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* heading south on 25 Aug at 14.9°N 68.8°W, 155nm NNW Curacao.

MGF noted occasional Cattle Egrets in September, with singles on 17th (at 26.65°N 88.3°W - 150nm south of Mississippi delta), and 24th (at 20.4°N 84.9°W - 90n SE. C. Catoche), and another on 22 Oct when 75nm S. Jamaica. Movement continued in November with a group of six 200nm S. Louisiana on 2nd, one 80nm east of Belize on 10th and four 170nm S. Galveston on 12th.

A probable Peregrine was aboard MV *Puerto Cortes* (Met) in the Florida Straits on 1 Oct, and another aboard MV *Lincolshire* (Met) 360nm south of Mississippi Delta 3-10 Oct. Three Peregrines landed similarly aboard SS *Lima* (Met) on 3 Oct, and were joined by another two off the coast of Florida. Four left soon after clearing NE Providence Channel, but one remained until close off the Azores on 19 Oct, having been carried a distance of over 3,000 nm.

On 3 Nov an unidentified hawk, possibly a *Buteo* sp. was aboard MV *Act 6* (Met) in position 11.5°N 79.0°W, 120nm north of Panama. It was seen to chase and catch a number of 'sparrow-type' birds also aboard.

On 6 Nov MCL recorded a probable Great Blue Heron *Ardea herodias* in the Florida Straits, 24.5°N 83.1°W, and a Mourning Dove *Zenaida macroura* on 18 Nov when 24.7°N 86.9°W, 180nm N. Cape Catoche, Mexico.

## SECTION E - MEDITERRANEAN and BLACK SEA

1988

On 7 Apr BRHW recorded the following migrants in position 33.4°N 27.5°E, 120nm SE Crete, and 120nm N. Libya: Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* (3), Common Whitethroat *S. communis* (1), Lesser Whitethroat *S. curruca* (6+), White Wagtail *Motacilla alba* (5+), Black-headed Wagtail *M.f.feldegg* (1), Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis* (1), Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* (1), Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* (1), Chiffchaff *P. collybita* (1 dark race), Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos* (1), Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* (1), Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos* (1), Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica* (1 near stern), and a Garganey *Anas querquedula* (1f flying over).

In the central Ionian Sea, (36.9°N 18.4°E) on 8th BRHW recorded a remarkable variety of migrants including: Lesser Whitethroat (2+), Wood Warbler *P. sibilatrix* (1), White Wagtail (6), *flava* Wagtail (2), Corn Bunting *Emberiza calandra* (1), Cretzschmar's Bunting *E. caesia* (1 - see *Sea Swallow* 38: 46), Tree Pipit (3+1 dead on deck), Black-eared Wheatear *O. hispanica* (1), Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* (1), Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*

(1+), Quail *Coturnix coturnix* (1 flying alongside, and overtaking ship at 21 kts), Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* (7 flying across stern), Swallow *Hirundo rustica* (several singles), and Swift *Apus apus* (1).

On 14 Apr when 15nm SE Sardinia, 39.2°N 09.9°E, BRHW had close views of Subalpine Warbler *S. cantillans* (1) and Spectacled Warbler *S. conspicillata* resting in pot-plants on deck.

On 9 May RLW recorded a number of migrants in the central Ionian including Turtle Doves (3), a possible Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina*, when 140nm SSE C. Passero, Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* and a possible Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* and possible Olivaceous Warbler *H. pallida* when 65nm E. Malta.

#### 1989

On 11 Mar CP recorded two Chiffchaffs and a Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala* aboard in position 33.7°N 32.9°E, 50nm S. Cyprus. Both Chiffchaffs were exhausted, and one died. The Sardinian Warbler left 6 hrs later, when within sight of Cyprus. The winds were WNW/8kts. On 16 Mar a Linnet *Carduelis cannabina* and a Swallow were aboard at 34.6°N 32.0°E, 15nm SW Cyprus, and in the Ionian Sea on 18th, a Robin and an Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina* were aboard briefly 70nm SW Navarin, Greece. Other migrants noted on 20 Mar, when in the Tyrrhenian Sea, 50.9°N 11.7°E, included: Chiffchaff, Swallow (2), Subalpine Warbler (2), and Sardinian Warbler (3). On 21st, when 10nm north of C. Corse, Corsica, two Swallows were seen flying round the ship, and a Stonechat *Saxicola torquata* was attacked by a Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*, which forced it into the sea and swallowed it whole. A Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* (F) was aboard for 2 hrs on 26 Mar, when 15nm S. Hyeres, France, and a Robin on 27th when 30nm NW Majorca on 27th.

On 21 Apr RLW photographed a Lesser Whitethroat when 9nm off coast of Algeria, 37.5°N 10.3°E, and also saw a Grey Wagtail *M. cinerea* aboard briefly.

In the eastern Med, RLW recorded the following species on 23 Apr, when heading east towards Tripoli, Lebanon, 100nm off the coast of Turkey: Turtle Doves (2), Nightingale (1+2), a probable Rufous Bushchat *Cercotrichas syriacus* ('brown above, pale below, with rufous tail held up with strong flicks'), White Wagtail, Redstart (1), Blackcap and House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* (2). When anchored close off Tripoli on 24th, a probable Corncrake *Crex crex* was seen briefly on deck.

On 19 May in the south Ionian sea, MV *Liverpool Star* (Met) recorded a probable Kestrel and a probable Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* in position 36.2°N 17.5°E, 100nm SE Cape Passero, Sicily.

On 23 May, 25nm SE Gibraltar, APB found a Sardinian Warbler (F) in the hangar, in an exhausted state, which died on 24th. Also present was a Reed Warbler, and a Swallow flew past. On 25th, when 30nm SW Almeria, Spain, a Reed Warbler, and a probable Melodius Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta* were aboard; winds were NE/2-3. On 31 May a Garden Warbler *S. borin* and a Turtle Dove were sighted when 50nm N. Tunisia.

MV *Liverpool Star* (Met) recorded a number of migrants in the western Med 27-28 Sep, including a Robin *Erithacus rubecula*, 50+ Swallows and six Swifts on 28th, when 25nm SW Almeria (Spain), and on 30th an unidentified hawk came aboard) in position 37.4°N 9.3°E, 12nm north of Bizerta, Tunisia. It made repeated attacks on a Robin, which had taken up residence since arrival aboard in the Bay of Biscay on 26th. A Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva* was noted at 0500 on 2 Oct in position 35.9°N 21.3°E - central Ionian Sea, 70nm SW Cape Matapan; on 3 Oct, when 80nm west of Cyprus, eight Swallows and a possible Icterine Warbler.

On 15 Oct four Reed Buntings *Emberiza schoeniclus* were aboard at 32.3°N 24.8°E, 55nm south of Crete, and on 17 Oct a Chaffinch (M) and a White Wagtail, when 35nm SW Sicily. Soon after leaving Ashdod, Israel, early am on 9 Nov a very large owl, probably an Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo*, and also a probable Black Wheatear *Oenanthe leucura* came aboard MV *Liverpool Star* (Met), but departed soon after dawn. A Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros* (F) was aboard in S. Ionian, 100nm SW C. Matapan on 12th.

On 7 Nov BG saw a Song Thrush aboard briefly at 41.7°N 10.01°E, 35nm E. Corsica, and at 1400 on 10 Nov, when 60nm E. Port Said at 31.8°N 31.5°E, two Chiffchaffs and three Spanish Sparrows *Passer hispaniolensis*. Numbers of Chiffchaffs had increased to at least 10 at 1600, when approaching Port Said.

On 29 Nov MV *City of Plymouth* (Met) recorded a possible Great Snipe *Gallinago media* aboard briefly off Cape Bon, 37.3°N 11.0°E; it headed off south. On 3 Dec a Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* perched aboard briefly when approaching Limassol, Cyprus.

In the Black Sea, an unidentified 'eagle' ('as large as a Greater Black-backed Gull') was sighted by MV *Lincolnshire* (Met), on 29 Nov, when 50nm east of Constanta, Romania (44.5°N 30.4°E).

## SECTION F - RED SEA AND GULF OF ADEN

1988

In mid-April MV *Fort Steele* (Met) was transiting northbound through the Bab el Mandeb Strait at night, and a large number of birds were aboard next morning. Most left immediately but the following remained for the next 1-2 days: two Turtle Doves *Streptopelia turtur*, two Hoopoes *Upupa epops*, two nightjars *Caprimulgus* sp., and a Grey-headed Kingfisher *Halcyon leucophala*, which stayed almost until arrival Suez, was photographed.

MV *Benalder* (Met) recorded a Hoopoe aboard on 20 Aug.

1989

On 3 May CP saw an Abyssinian Roller *Coracias abyssinicus* aboard in the central Red Sea (19.9°N 38.6°E).

On 20 Apr MV *Kowloon Bay* (Met) recorded a probable Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* aboard for 30 mins in position 24.2°N 36.6°E, 40nm west of Port King Fahd, Saudi Arabia.

On 5 May RLW photographed a Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* and Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* in the northern Red Sea.

APB noted two juv. *flava* Wagtails aboard in the Gulf of Aden, 13.2°N 49.8°E on 31 Aug, and a Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striatus* at 52.0°N 14.0°E on 15 Oct. On 16 Oct a Spotted Flycatcher was aboard at 48.0°N 13.0°E.

In the Red Sea, APB recorded the following on 19 Oct: Scops Owl *Otus scops*, Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*, Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* (3 juv), Swallow *Hirundo rustica*, Hobby *Falco subbuteo* (2 juv), Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*, Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*, and a Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis*.

On 13 Nov BG recorded a Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti* and a Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* aboard briefly at 26.9°N 35.2°E.

## SECTION G - INDIAN OCEAN AND ARABIAN SEA

1989

On 31 Jan BG first noted a Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* aboard when 90nm east of Maldives (06.9°N 74.3°E, which was carried westward until 4 Feb, when 40nm SE Aden (12.5°N 45.5°E, where it was killed and eaten by a Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* (F), which came aboard briefly, before disappearing.

On 27 Oct a Paradise Flycatcher *Tersiphone paradisi* (F) was photographed aboard MV *Falcon Arrow* (Met) in position 3.6°N 78.0°E, 100nm SW Sri Lanka.

On 7 Nov MV *Kogoro* (Met) recorded a probable Indian Pond Heron *Ardeola grayii* and two probable Intermediate Egrets *Egretta intermedia* (with yellow beak and black legs), when 65nm SW Nicobar Is. (6.2°N 92.5°E). When 45nm SE Nicobar Is. a small hawk, possibly a Hobby *Falco subbuteo* closed the ship. On 9th, when off Dondra, Sri Lanka, c.40 similar egrets were sighted heading east, and two further groups flying north.

MV *Havkong* (Met) photographed a Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* on 22 Nov, 100nm SE Nicobar Is. (5.7°N 85.6°E), and two medium-sized white egrets on 23rd when 240nm SW Nicobar Is., (5.9°N 88.1°E).

## SECTION H - PERSIAN GULF AND GULF OF OMAN

1988

On 25 Sep CP recorded a Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus* (F) in the central Gulf of Oman, flying south at 40 ft. On board were a Desert Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca minda*, observed closely for 35 mins, and a Palm Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis*. On 26th another Desert Lesser Whitethroat was aboard for at least one hour, and a group of seven Grey Herons *Ardea cinerea* was seen approaching from NW in single line astern, at a height of 10m. They landed on the calm sea about ½ mile away, and remained there for 8 mins, before taking off again and circling to gain height. They flew SE for only about a mile, before resting again for another 4 mins, but one remained behind, so the others returned to keep it company for at least another 10 mins; the group was then lost from view. On 27th a Palm Dove was seen at night, trying to fly into the upper deck lights, and was caught and released.

On 25 Sep when 120nm NW Bahrein, APB recorded a Pied Wheatear *O. pleschanka* and a Hoopoe *Upupa epops* aboard. On 29 Sep a Hoopoe was aboard in the NE Persian Gulf, and also a possible Upcher's Warbler *Hippolais languida*.

In the west Gulf of Oman on 7 Oct CP recorded a Red-tailed Wheatear *Oenanthe xanthopyrnum* aboard for an hour. On 10 Oct a House Martin *Delichon urbica* circled the ship for ½ hour in the Straits of Hormuz, and a Lesser Whitethroat remained for 2 hrs. On 23 Oct a White Wagtail *Motacilla alba* was aboard briefly, 30nm west of Dubai. In the same area on 18 Nov, a Desert Warbler *Sylvia nana* was aboard for 15 mins; it was very tame and landed on a crew member's hand to drink water from a lettuce leaf.

1989

A Hoopoe was aboard MV *Torbat* (Met) on leaving Dubai on 3 Oct, and photographed when at anchor off Mina Gaboos, Oman.

A Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri* was recorded by MV *Kagoro* (Met) on 18 Nov.

On 26 Nov BG recorded two Greater Flamingos *Phoenicopterus ruber* flying NE at 26.9°N 51.4°E.

## SECTION I - PACIFIC, CHINA SEA, YELLOW SEA, CORAL SEA AND PHILIPPINE SEA

1988

In the Arafura Sea on 5 Mar, NGC recorded a flock of 35 Torres Strait Imperial Pigeons *Ducula spilorrhoa*, 20nm ENE New Year Is. (10.6°S 133.6°W flying ENE towards New Guinea).

In the Gulf of Thailand on 17 Mar, BRHW recorded an Oriental Pratincole *Glareola lactea*, and a Crow-billed Drongo *Dicrurus macrocercus*, in position 07.9°N 104.9°W, 140nm NE Malaysia.

In the Coral Sea, when 7nm NE Bonvouloir Is., 10.1°S 151.9°E, NGC recorded a number of unusual species which came aboard attracted by the ships lights during heavy rain at 2000 on 8 Jul, including two Superb Fruit Doves *Ptilinopus superbus* (1M and 1F), a White-breasted Fruit Dove *P. rivoli* and 10 probable Papuan Spine-tailed Swift *Medansia novaeguineae*.

On 13 Oct NGC recorded three Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*, in non-breeding plumage, which circled twice in position 26.7°S 155.0°E, 82nm ENE C. Moreton, Queensland.

1989

On 18 Feb MV *Clydebank* (Met) recorded a Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* sheltering aboard in position 16.6°S 164.2°E 150nm SW New Hebrides.

On 9 Mar MGF sighted a Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* (with black bill and legs, yellow feet) at 05.9°N 128.9°E, 180nm SE Philippines in the Molucca passage.

On 26 Mar a Long-eared Owl *Asio otus* was photographed aboard MV *Garth* (Met) in position 31.8°N 135.5°E while passing south of Kyushu, Japan. On 3 Apr a Peregrine Falcon, identified from photographs as an immature of the North Pacific race *Falco peregrinus pealei*, came aboard at 51.7°N 172.8°W when passing close south of the Aleutian Is. and remained until about 60nm from Vancouver I. on 9th - a distance of about 1,800nm course 095°. It spent most of the time observing activity from the top of the cranes, making occasional forays to prey on small land birds at first, and was later seen to attack larger seabirds.

On 3 Apr ARL recorded a Yellow-faced Shearwater *Chionis alba* which attempted unsuccessfully to land aboard in position 58.3°S 69.9°W, 240nm SSW Cape Horn. This was the first landbird seen since departing Falklands on 8 Feb. On 4 Apr a Shearwater and a Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* suddenly appeared when in position 55.0°S 74.8°W, 70nm WSW Islas Grafton. The weather was calm with light winds but a heavy NW swell.

At 1625 on 19 Jun BG recorded two Cattle Egrets circling when 300nm SE Honshu, Japan (35.7°N 147.9°E). One settled aboard overnight, but was gone next morning. On 24 Jun he saw a Little Green Heron *Butorides striatus* circling briefly, and also a Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus* aboard 2 hrs. when 140nm NW Amami Gunto (Japan), 28.5°N 127.0°E.

Early am on 4 Jul ARL recorded six probable Snowy Egrets *Egretta thula* circling the ship during a severe electrical storm in position 07.4°N 78.9°W, 50nm SW Panama. A probable Cattle Egret was seen briefly later. On 14 Jul several groups of Cattle Egret (6, 12) came aboard during the night and early morning, totalling 24 by daybreak: position was 04.0°N 78.4°W, 52nm WSW Pta. Charambira, Colombia.

In inshore waters off San Francisco, an Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* was photographed landing on the mast, carrying a large fish, aboard RV *Farnella* (Met) on 9 Aug.

MV *Torbay* (Met) was west of Taiwan 11-14 Sep during Typhoon 'Sarah' and found a number of birds on board. From photographs taken, these included Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus*, a Blue-winged Pitta *Pitta moluccensis*, a possible Great Reedwarbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*, and unidentified pipits *Anthus* sp. and larks *Alaudidae* sp. On passage between Hong Kong and Singapore on 16 Sep, a number of swallows *Hirundo* sp. appeared, possibly attracted by insects coming from semi-opened containers containing fresh garlic and potatoes. They were very weak and were offered water. Also on board was a wagtail *Motacilla* sp. and another larger bird which attacked and killed a number of the smaller birds. Three corpses were found headless, and two more with smashed skulls. The predator had a straight bill, and from the description might have been a Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*.

On 15 Sep NGC recorded a (Ruddy) Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* which landed aboard in an exhausted state in position 34.4°S 162.9°E, 480nm W, Cape Reinga, New Zealand.

On 5 Oct MV *Pacific Pintail* (Met) recorded an unidentified sandpiper *Calidris* sp. aboard for about an hour in position 33.6°N 137.7°W, 800nm WSW San Francisco.

MV *Satucket* (Met) recorded a Little Green Heron on 9 Oct, 40nm west of Borneo (5.0°N 113.0°E).

**A trans-Pacific hitch-hike.** On 10 Nov, when about 120nm west of California, a probable Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria* landed aboard MV *Direct Kea* (Met), and remained 14 days until approaching Australia on 24th. It arrived in a wet and bedraggled state, but was fed on a mixture of bread and chopped bacon, and fresh water, apparently regained its weight and condition. It disappeared when within sight of the Australian coast.

On 14 Dec a Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* (M) was photographed aboard MV *Havkong* (Met), which landed aboard during strong NNE winds, 30nm SW Vietnam (6.0°N 108.0°E).



Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* aboard RV *Farnella*

Photo: A.V. Robinson

#### SECTION J - SOUTH ATLANTIC

1989

On 6 Mar MV *Falklands Desire* (Met) recorded an Eared Dove *Zenaida auriculata* aboard briefly in position 49.5°S 61.2°W, 120nm north of the Falklands. It seemed in good condition.

On 20 Apr DL & BT recorded a flock of 14 Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis* which landed aboard in position 44.8°S 50.4°W, 550nm SW Mar del Plata, Argentina.

M.B.C.

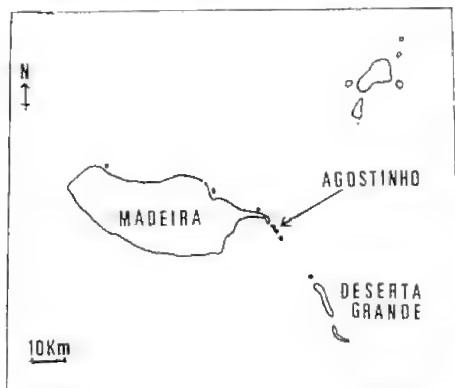
## ROSEATE TERNS AND OTHER SEABIRDS AT MADEIRA

By Dr W.R.P.Bourne

When I was a schoolboy reading my way through the bird books in the public library I became fascinated by Ronald Lockley's account of visits to the breeding-places of the North Atlantic petrels in *Shearwaters* (1942). I was further impressed by the number seen at sea around the most important site, Madeira, when the ship called there during a student expedition to the Cape Verde Islands in July 1951, but I had given myself sunstroke standing in the bow peering around through binoculars in search of shearwaters all the previous day, and failed to get ashore. Thus when, in February 1973, I eventually visited the island on a research ship, and we were shown around by the local bird-man Alec Zino this fulfilled an already old ambition.

First we visited a Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus* site which had escaped Lockley in a gorge above Funchal, and then the breeding-place of an endemic gadfly-petrel, the Freira *Pterodroma madeira*, in the upper peaks, which had been lost for half a century. Alec rediscovered it in 1969 by playing to shepherds tape-recordings of the call of the closely-related Gon-gon *P. feae* (which breeds on the Desertas offshore), until one recognised it. He then had to rescue the birds from a collector (Zino and Zino 1986). My wife and I have since revisited the Zinos four times, usually in Royal Fleet Auxiliaries, in December 1983, May 1986, and January and June 1990. It thus may be useful to review the results.

It is not entirely clear why there should be so many pelagic seabirds breeding in the Madeira archipelago (see map), since few birds occur over the deep, rather barren surrounding seas. But the regular presence of feeding flocks of hundreds of gulls and petrels along the 200m line offshore, and especially in the approaches to the channels between the islands along the Desertas ridge to the east, suggests that the submarine topography may cause local turbulence and upwelling in the Canary Current to bring food to the surface around the islands. Many birds may



The Madeiran archipelago



also go to feed in the area of upwelling which lacks suitable breeding-places along the edge of the African continental shelf to the east.

The commonest species at sea were Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea* and Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulwerii*, which were widespread in small numbers in the summer but absent in the winter. Tens of Manx Shearwaters *Puffinus puffinus* were also seen, in May 1986, off Funchal and the eastern cape, Pta. de S. Lourenco, and occasional Little Shearwaters *P. assimilis* were seen arriving in the evening or departing in the morning north of the Desertas and around Porto Santo in December, January and May. Flocks of Little Shearwaters were also been seen in January 1990, feeding with gadfly petrels *Pterodroma* sp. and hundreds of gulls in the channel between Pta. de S. Lourenco and the Desertas, and many larger shearwaters also joined these flocks in June.

Storm-petrels seemed surprisingly scarce at sea, but the Madeiran Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma castro* was seen east of Pta. de S. Lourenco in July, and one came to the lights of a ship anchored off Funchal in December. The harbour at Funchal is also frequented by a motley array of visiting gulls and terns, including two immature Ring-billed Gulls *Larus delawarensis* from North America in December 1983, three or four in January 1990, and an immature Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis* in June 1990.

Alec's son Dr Frank Zino, who has recently secured the assistance of ICI with poisoning the rats which present the worst threat to the Freiras (Buckle and Zino 1989), took us up for a picnic at midnight in the clouds during the night of 13-14 June 1990 to listen to them. The Freiras only called occasionally, a ghostly 'ooo-er', though they are apparently sometimes noisier. Many more Manx Shearwaters could also be heard calling around the vast precipices on both sides of the island below us, though nobody has recently succeeded in finding their nests in these islands.

Frank also arranged for the Portuguese Naval and Port Authorities to take me out to Deserta Grande on 16-17 January 1990 in search of an entirely dark fork-tailed 'Angel Petrel' described from Madeira in the last century (Heineken 1829) to see if it was the same as the mysterious birds recently caught on the Salvages and in Britain (James and Robertson 1985, Carruthers *et al.* 1989). I was dropped at the headquarters of the new Desertas National Park on a rock fall on the west side of Deserta Grande, and led by the wardens up 300m of crumbling steps cut in the overhanging cliffs to the abandoned whaler's lookouts on the bare, arid, eroded top of the island. Unfortunately although we found plenty of remains of the rather distinct local 'Herring' Gulls *Larus (cachinnans?) atlantis*, Cory's Shearwaters and Bulwer's Petrels which nest there in the summer, and heard some Madeiran Storm-petrels still coming in to the last chicks at night, we caught nothing in mist-nets set around the headquarters.



Hedquarters of the Desertas National Park on the west side of Deserta Grande. Numerous Bulwer's Petrels and some Cory's Shearwaters and Madeiran Storm-petrels nest in the boulders beyond the house

We therefore returned on 16-17 June 1990, to try again to lure birds to tape-recordings of the call of the bird found on the Salvages on Ilheu de Agostinho. This is a small, rugged uninhabited island about 2km long and 100m high separated from the east end of the main island of Madeira by a narrow channel and three cliffs. While some of its wildlife has been reduced by rabbits and rats, it had a huge colony of about 1,000 pairs of Herring Gulls at all stages of the breeding cycle from the last eggs to the first flying chicks, about half a dozen pairs of Berthelot's Pipit *Anthus bertheloti*, and visiting Kestrels *Falco tinnunculus* and Feral Pigeons *Columba livia*. We netted only a Bulwer's Petrel and heard Cory's Shearwaters, Madeiran Storm-petrels and Barn Owls *Tyto alba* at night.

Another local mystery involved the status of the Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii*, which had been recorded in the islands several times in the past, when young birds had sometimes been collected, but breeding had never been proved (Bannerman and Bannerman 1965). Since no less than 1,000 pairs have now been found nesting in the Azores (Gomersall and Dunn 1990, Dr. E.K. Dunn *pers. comm.*), eleven in the Salvages (Roux 1983), and one in the Canaries (Martin *et al* 1989), they were also to be expected here. While most birds visiting Funchal Harbour in June 1990 appeared to be Common Terns *S. hirundo*, there were also occasional Roseates, and the presence on the outer side of the breakwater of a flock of eleven in full breeding plumage (with up to a third of the base of the bill red) implied that there might be more feeding out at sea.



Ilheu de Aghostinho looking west towards the cliffs and strait dividing it from the main island of Madeira, to show native vegetation

We saw terns carrying fish along the coast in both directions, indicating that they must be breeding nearby. We eventually located a small unobtrusive colony of at least a dozen pairs of both species at the east end of the islands, on a high, steep, vegetated cliff slope. This type of site used (also found in the Azores) may help explain why they were missed in the past, though judging by the number of birds seen along the shore there could be scores, or even hundreds of pairs breeding in the archipelago as a whole, including a considerable proportion of Roseate Terns.

Alec Zino's achievements as a 'naturalist investigator', have included many original observations, securing the Salvages as a National Park, and endless hospitality to visitors (in all of which he has been joined by his family). It is therefore a pleasure to record that these have recently been recognised by the award of a medal by the city of Funchal and by his appointment as a 'Comendador da Ordem do Infante Dom Henrique'. (The Infante Dom Henrique is better known to us as Henry the Navigator, grandson of John of Gaunt and cousin of our Henry V, who promoted the first organised European marine exploration).

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## PARADISE LOST ?

### BIRDWATCHING ALONG THE FLY RIVER, PAPUA NEW GUINEA

by Captain D.M. Simpson, M.N.

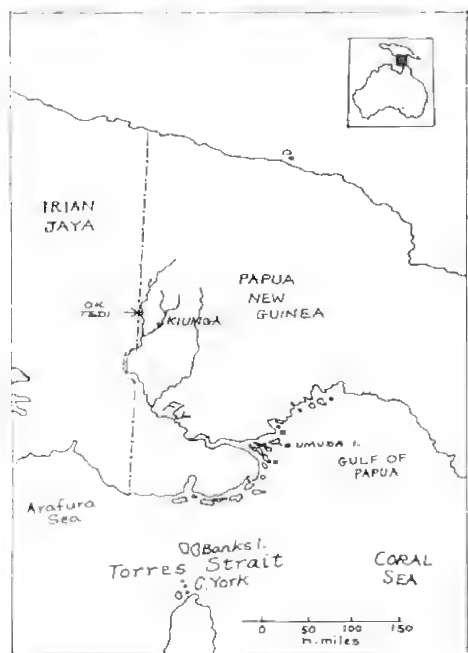
During periods of 1987/88 I was employed by Steamships Coastwise Shipping, on loan from Swire Pacific Offshore, successively in command of MV *Kiunga Chief* and MV *Kiwai Chief* carrying cargoes of copper concentrate from Kiunga, situated in central New Guinea, down the Fly River for discharge to the bulk carrier, and 'mother ship', *Banta*. This was moored off Umuda Island, in the Gulf of Papua (in position 8°27'S 143°51'E), and 15nm SSE of the entrance to the Fly River (river mile 1) at Korinoro Point. The copper is extracted from the Ok Tedi mine at the summit of Mt. Fubilan in the Star Mountains, and transmitted by slurry pipe to the loading terminal at Kiunga (river mile 458). From Kiunga the Fly River meanders and wanders to the sea through the most magnificent lowland country that I have ever encountered in a lifetime of travel. For part of its length the river forms the border between Papua New Guinea and Indonesian Irian Jaya, but we never observed the presence of any Indonesian officialdom, either civil or military, and throughout the whole journey to the sea there is not a fence, road, automobile or telegraph pole to be seen. The scenery is of lush and dense rain forests, swamps and savannahs. Navigation is tricky at the best of times, and the changing heights of the river adds greatly to the excitement. The skipper I relieved here was known as 'Mudbank', for obvious reasons, and there used to be another fellow around who was known as 'Six-tree Macleod': he ran the ship right over the bank and knocked down six trees!

Crocodiles are still commonly seen, though the increasing river traffic is gradually driving them away. The Rusa Deer were introduced many years ago by the Dutch, and we often sighted small herds in the grasslands. These are apparently very common in both savannah and forest, and are one of the prime sources of food for the native people. Other mammal life is scarce, apart from bats. Reptiles are much more evident, and in addition to the crocodiles, there are fresh-water turtles and large snakes. I once saw a White-bellied Sea Eagle *Haliaeetus leucogaster* lift a live turtle from the water, and fly off with it.

Perhaps most impressive of all is the sheer mass and bewildering variety of insect life. After a night steaming through the grasslands, the crew have to use shovels to clean the mass of dead 'bugs' off the foredeck.

Birdlife is prolific, and for the ornithologist, this little-known part of the world is indeed a paradise. I recorded some of New Guinea's rarer birds, such as:

Gurney's Eagle *Aquila gurneyi*,  
Doria's Hawk *Megatriorchis doriae*, and  
Vulturine Parrot *Psittirichas fulgidus*.



Of the Birds of Paradise (BOP), I saw Twelve-wired BOP *Selucidis melanoleuca*, and Greater BOP *Paradisaea apoda*; John Boughey (JB), Chief Engineer of *Kiwai Chief*, recorded a King BOP *Cicinnurus regius*. We also saw Magnificent Riflebird *Ptiloris magnificus*, Trumpet Manucode *Manucodia keraudrenii*, and Glossy-mantled Manucode *M.*

*atra*. At the mining township of Tabubil, on the banks of the Ok Tedi river, we found a tree with a pair of resident Papuan Frogmouths *Podargus papuensis*. This grotesque bird can also be found at night around the arc lights at Kiunga port. Golden Myna *Mino anais* and Yellow-faced Myna *M. dumontis* are both common.

On one section of the Fly River the Bat Hawk *Machaerhamphus alcinus* was reasonably common: this is worthy of note because it seems to have become very scarce in much of its range in Asia. The number and variety of pigeons and parrots is remarkable. Both these families are very well represented in New Guinea, and many other water birds such as herons, egrets, ibis and spoonbills.

Other birds easy to see along the Fly, because of their large size or outlandish appearance are:

Black-necked Stork *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus*.

Magpie Goose *Anseranus semipalmata*,

Wedge-tailed Eagle *Aquila audax*.

White-bellied Sea Eagle *Haliaeetus leucogaster*,

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*.

Southern Crowned Pigeon *Goura scheepmakeri*,

Channel-billed Cuckoo *Skythrops novaehollandiae*

Eclectus Parrot *Eclectus roratus*.

Palm Cockatoo *Probosciger aterrimus*. This huge cockatoo gets my vote of 'King of the River'. It can often be seen early in the morning standing atop some high dead tree, master of all he surveys, giving out his loud and not unmusical whoops and whistles.

giving out his loud and not unmusical whoops and whistles.

Blyth's Hornbill *Rhyticeros plicatus*. This large hornbill is very interesting, as it is the only one to have made its way across the 'Wallace Line'. It is very common in all forested parts of the Fly, and I have also seen this species on Bougainville Island.

The following seabird species were observed along the Fly River during the period:

9 Nov 87 - 15 Jan 88 - MV *Kiunga Chief*.

14 Jan - 12 Feb 88 - MV *Kiwai Chief* (with JB).

Species which could not be positively identified are indicated by the symbol (U).

**Great Frigatebird** *Fregata minor*. Regularly seen off Umuda Island in small numbers.

**Lesser Frigatebird** *F. ariel*. Also regularly seen off Umuda Island. Somewhat more common than *F. minor*.

**Christmas Frigatebird** *F. andrews* (U). This species is apparently unrecorded from New Guinea. A bird I observed at Port Moresby on 8 Nov 87 showed all white underbody, and may have been a female of this species. JB is also sure he had a Christmas Frigate at the Fly River entrance, off Umuda Island, in December. We therefore strongly suspect its presence here.

**Little Black Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax sulcirostris*. Said to be a rare breeding resident, but a very common visitor to New Guinea. I observed it many times, all the way along the river from the entrance to the inland river port of Kiunga.

**Little Pied Cormorant** *P. melanoleucos*. This is a common resident, and we found it throughout the length of the river.

**Australian Darter** *Anhinga melanogaster*. Common all along the river. It is said to be a scarce resident, but a common winter visitor from Australia. The period of observation, however, coincides with the Australian summer, and year round observations will probably show the species to be resident and numerous in the Trans-Fly region. (The same may apply to *P. sulcirostris* above.)

**Brown Booby** *Sula leucogaster*. Singles and small parties observed off Umuda I.

**Australian Pelican** *Pelecanus conspicillatus*. This breeds in Australia, but visits the Trans-Fly. We often sighted single birds, and on 18 Nov saw a flock of 30 at river mile 171 (ie 171 miles upstream from Korinoro Pt.)

**Whiskered Tern** *Chlidonias hybridus* (P). Very common and numerous in grasslands/swamps June and July. Said to be a common visitor from Australia Feb to Oct.

**White-winged Black Tern** *C. leucopterus*. Large numbers seen in the lower and middle reaches of the Fly River during Nov and Dec, but not positively recorded in Jan and Feb. The species was noted as being active and noisy at night in the Fly River grasslands.

**Gull-billed Tern** *Sterna nilotica*. One or two sighted off Umuda I. on 28 Jan 88.

**Caspian Tern** *S. caspia*. One sighted off Umuda I. on 28 Jan 88.

**Common Tern** *S. hirundo* (U). Many probables off Umuda I. amongst Roseates on 16 Nov.

**Roseate Tern** *S. dougallii*. At least 60 fishing off Umuda I. on 16 Nov.

**Black-naped Tern** *S. sumatrana*. Often sighted off Umuda I., and occasionally in the lower reaches of the river.

**Little Tern** *S. albigrons*. Fairly common throughout the period, as far upstream as river mile 250.

**Swift Tern** *S. bergii*. Common off Umuda I. Sometimes numbers of this species followed the ship into the river, all the while fishing in the vessel's propellor wash. On one occasion a party accompanied us in this manner as far as river mile 85.

**Lesser Crested Tern** *S. bengalensis*. Fishing parties common off Umuda I.

I returned to the Fly River on MV *Umuda Chief* from 5 Apr to 13 Jul 88. During this period I increased my Fly River bird list to some 200 species. The most interesting additions were:

Raggiana Bird of Paradise *Paradisaea raggiana*.

Fly River Grassbird *Megalurus albolinbutus*.

Little Paradise Kingfisher *Tanysiptera hydrochloris*,  
Large Fig Parrot *Psittaculirostris desnayesii*, and  
Orange-breasted Fig Parrot *Cyclopsitta gulielmitestis*.

My most astonishing sighting was a Southern Cassowary *Casuarius casuarius* which swam right across the main river, and then trotted off into the long grass.

The natives seem to be getting more annoyed, as occasionally they would let fly at the passing ship with bows and arrows. I observed two individual crocodiles with a massive girth, and estimated their length as at least 20 ft.

No account of the Fly River would be complete without a mention of Captain Ray Taylor. He has spent much of his life on the Fly, both as a riverboat captain and surveyor. All the river charts that we use are hand-drawn by him, and it is largely thanks to him that we are able to stay afloat for much of the time!

**COMMENT.** This must be one of the last unspoilt natural wildernesses left on this planet, and it would be wonderful to have the whole area designated and preserved as a National Park. But I fear that the relentless greed and intrusion of mankind and his civilisation will destroy this magnificent relic of the natural world. On the one hand I feel privileged to be able to work in such a place, but I also feel sad, for I know that we ourselves with our ships mark the beginning of the end. We are here to carry out the copper, but others will follow to take out the trees and develop the land. For thousands of years this place has been the domain of the crocodile, eagle, and cassowary, but now their days are numbered.

At the Ok Tedi Mine, large quantities of chemicals such as hydrogen peroxide and cyanide are used to leach out the gold. There is already evidence that the Ok Tedi river, a major tributary of the Fly, is being poisoned and contaminated from mine tailings; fish life is already suffering, and soon the birds of prey will be affected. But such is the story the world over.....

Captain D.M. Simpson, M.N., 4 Ruswarp Lane, Whitby, North Yorks, YO21 1ND.



## LANDBIRD REPORTS FROM OCEAN WEATHERSHIP STATION LIMA, 1989.

Summarised by Commander M.B. Casement, O.B.E., Royal Navy.

Records from or near Station Lima (57°N 20°W - 210nm WSW Rockall, 450nm S. Iceland) were received from H.J.Freckleton and Met. Staff of OWS *Cumulus*, and observations cover the following periods:

2-29 Apr, 5 May-3 Jun, 11-26 Jun, 26 Aug-12 Sep, 30 Sep-20 Oct, 20-22 Nov 1989.

Eider *Somateria mollissima*. One probable on 22 Nov.

Merlin *Falco columbarius*. 29 Apr (1F) flew past.

Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*. 20 Nov (2) aboard 2hrs.

Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*. 20 Oct (1) flew past SE.

Purple Sandpiper *Calidris alpina*. 11 Jun (1).

Sanderling *Crocethia alba*. 20 Nov (1) aboard briefly.

Redshank *Tringa totanus*? 21 Nov (2) aboard 1 hr.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*. 13 Jun (1), 21 Nov (1) circling.  
23 Nov (1) aboard briefly.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*. 5 May (1) flew past NW, 28 May (1) aboard 31 May (1)  
Flying NNW.

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*. 22 Nov (1) aboard 1½ hrs, dep SE.

Black-and-white Warbler *Mniotilta varia*. One possible aboard briefly on 5 Sep (1).

Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*. 3 Jun (1) aboard, died, 4 Jun, (1), 26 Aug (10).  
12 Sep (1), 30 Sep (1F), 1 Oct (1M + 1F).

Redwing *T. iliacus*. Singles on 5 Apr, 22 May and 14 Oct.

Mistle Thrush *T. viscivorus*. 2 Apr (1).

## SEABIRD REPORTS FROM OCEAN WEATHER SHIP STATION LIMA

By Captain P.W.G. Chilman, M.N.

All observations are again from OWS *Cumulus*, and the format of the summary table remains unchanged. The periods of observations are not continuous but reach a total of 296 days this year, eight days more than in 1988.

Totals of daily counts were (including immatures shown in brackets) 11,072 Fulmars (5 blue phase), 123 Gannets (43 immatures), 3 Herring Gulls (2), 273 Lesser Black-backed Gulls (85), 175 Greater Black-backed Gulls (10), 3 Glaucous Gulls (1), and 10,557 Kittiwakes (not separated).

A doubtful report of two Sooty Terns *Sterna fuscata* in May was received, but is not included in the table, since the observer was unsure. While it is certainly unusual, Sooty Terns have been reported in the British Isles, from time to time, and would be possible here, if the weather conditions were favourable.

Species reported in previous years but not seen in 1989 were Cory's Shearwater, Wilson's Storm-petrel, Leach's Storm-petrel, Little Gull, Bonaparte's Gull, Slender-billed Gull, Little Tern, Sandwich Tern, Little Auk and Puffin.

Fulmars were much the same numbers as last year after the marked drop in 1987, but whereas their highest month in 1988 was March, with an average of 108 per day, the average in March this year was only 16, and no month reached 100 per day.

Arctic Skuas were noted as attacking Kittiwakes on seven separate days in September, something which has not been reported before.

Since no oiled birds were reported this year, only one in 1988, it is to be hoped that this is a sign of cleaner seas.

The RNBWS is most grateful for the devoted work of the Met. Staff of OWS *Cumulus*, without which this report would not be possible.

## OCEAN WEATHER SHIP OBSERVATIONS

### Summary of Seabird Sightings, Station Lima (57°N 20°W)

Month 1989	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Observation days (296)	26	24	24	28	26	26	16	24	24	28	26	24
Fulmar	o	o	o	+	o	o	x	x	x	o	x	o
Great Shearwater								—		+		
Sooty Shearwater	—				—	—	—	+	—	—	—	
Manx Shearwater						—			—			
Little Shearwater									—			
British Storm-petrel							—		—	—		
Gannet			—	—	—	+	+		—			—
Great Skua	—	—	—	+	—	—	—	—	+	—		
Pomarine Skua						—		—		—		
Arctic Skua	—		—	—		—	—	—	—			
Long-tailed Skua								—				
Herring Gull	—			—					—			
Lesser Black-backed Gull	—	—	—		+	+	+	—	—	—	+	
Greater Black-backed Gull	—		—	—	+	—	—	—	—	—		
Glaucous Gull								—		—		
Island Gull	—		—									
Kittiwake	o	x	x	x	o	+	o	+	x	+	o	+
Black-headed Gull												
Arctic Tern								—				
Common Tern								—				
Guillemot			—				—					
Razorbill												

#### KEY

— Occasional sightings  
+ Average 1-9 per day

o Average 10-49 per day  
x Average 50 or more per day

## SHORT NOTES

### SEABIRD OBSERVATIONS FROM MET. LOGBOOKS

By Captain P.W.G. Chilman, M.N.

Another batch of bird reports extracted from Met. Logs has been received this year. As usual, some could not be identified due to lack of information, but it was possible to suggest an identity for most. Many gave excellent descriptions and sketches. The following are a selection of some of the interesting reports received:-

M.V. *Resolution Bay*, Captain R.T. Wood, had two Yellow-faced Sheathbills *Chionis alba* aboard, between Cape Horn and the Falkland Islands on 27/28 Dec 88. These would presumably be juveniles, which are said to disperse north from Antarctica to reach the Falklands and Patagonia.

M.V. *Auckland Star*, Captain P. Mathews, had an adult Red-billed Tropicbird *Phaethon aethereus* aboard at 17.4°N 55.4°W. It was thought to be injured, so was placed in a cardboard box and fed raw fish, which it consumed with gusto, and was also given water from a pipette. As these birds do not usually drink fresh water, I don't think this was necessary, but obviously did no harm. The bird recovered, and was able to fly off next day. I imagine it had struck some part of the rigging in the dark, which I have found them prone to do.

M.V. *Remuera Bay*, Captain R.J. Bland, had exceptionally good weather on passage from Cape Town to Melbourne. When 160nm ENE of Iles Crozet on 24 Feb 89, four penguins were seen, which were believed to be Macaroni Penguins *Eudyptes chrysolophus*, but could possibly have been Rockhoppers *E. chrysocome*, both of which breed at Crozet. Next day, when about 150nm NW of Kerguelen Is., approx 160 penguins were sighted in 12 groups of up to 20 birds. These were thought to be Gentoos *Pygoscelis papua*. Penguins are well known to disperse widely, but it is rare to obtain good views, because of the prevailing conditions.

M.V. *Trinidad and Tobago*, Captain J.S. Gavin. On 17 Oct 89, when about 110nm NE Caicos I., in 23.0°N 70.4°W, an immature Double-crested Cormorant *Phalacrocorax auritus* was sighted. This is an unusual distance offshore for this normally inshore bird.

M.V. *Act 5*, Captain E.C. Smith. On 3 Sep 89, when 1500nm NE Pitcairn, groups of 3-4 White Terns *Gygis alba* were sighted at close range. White Terns were seen regularly over the next four days, including a flock of 10 on 6 Sep, when just north of Pitcairn. This is an interesting report, as their pelagic dispersal is largely unknown.

I must thank all those who have sent in reports, and the Met. Office for making them available.

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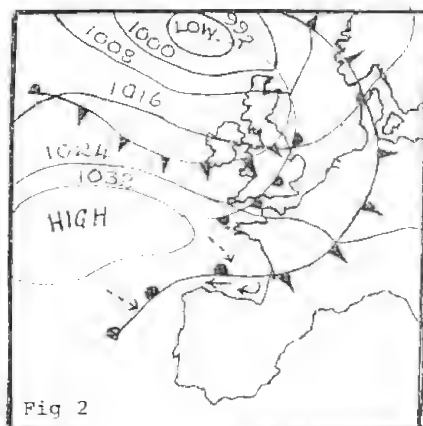
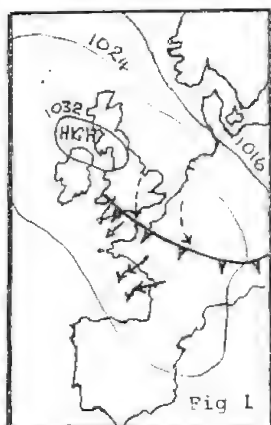
# ASPECTS OF MIGRATION OVER THE ENGLISH CHANNEL AND BISCAY, OCTOBER 1989.

by Dr. J.D. Parrack.

On 1 Oct '89 my wife and I boarded SS *Bretagne* (Brittany Ferries) at Plymouth, bound for Santander and a short holiday in Llanes, N. Spain. We left harbour at 1030 in conditions of thin low cloud and hazy sunshine, with offshore haze limiting visibility to about 2-3nm.

Just after losing sight of land a Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba yarrellii* flew north low overhead calling loudly. Nothing further of interest occurred until about 1230-1300 when two more *alba* Wagtails, two Meadow Pipits *Anthus pratensis*, three Chiffchaffs *Phylloscopus collybita* and a Swallow *Hirundo rustica* joined the ship, seen around the stern flying south. In the next hour we picked up two more Chiffchaffs, another Meadow Pipit and 3-4 Goldcrests *Regulus regulus*. At this point the sky began to clear, and another Chiffchaff, two more Goldcrests, two Song Thrushes *Turdus philomelos* and a Robin *Erithacus rubecula* arrived. Shortly afterwards we sighted Ushant ahead, and all landbirds left.

At this point, another birdwatcher had briefly drawn my attention to a *Catharacta* Skua which alighted on the water astern, some 10-15 nm north of Ushant. It appeared very pale on the flanks and parts of the underwing, but the head could not be seen from the 3/4-rear view of it, and determination of the actual colour was rendered difficult by reflection from the water surface. We therefore do not wish to make



Dotted lines/arrows show movements of fronts.  
Solid lines/arrows show movement (postulated) of birds —  
Fig 1 — passerines      Fig 2 — seabirds

more of this observation than to mention it, in view of the recent publicity in these pages (Bourne, 1989).

On the morning of 2 Oct an ornithologist doing an early morning watch reported a Robin, 4-5 Goldcrests, a Serin *Serinus serinus*, a small party of other finches, almost certainly Linnets *Acanthus cannabina*, two Song Thrushes and a Buzzard sp. (most probably a Honey Buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus*, overhead, heading SW). By 0700, the ship was about 70nm north of Santander. By 0900, when 25-30nm from the port, we had added two *flava* Wagtails, two Chiffchaffs, 1-2 Robins, two Goldcrests, and a Stock Dove *Columba oenas*. During the next 15 mins four more Goldcrests, three Robins and four Meadow Pipits arrived, but soon thereafter all birds left as the coastline came into view. The morning throughout had been almost cloudless, but a low haze over the sea kept visibility down to 1-3nm at first, slowly clearing.

**Weather conditions.** References to the daily weather summaries supplied by the Met. Office, as quoted in daily newspapers, showed an anticyclone centred over the British Isles, moving slowly SE, while a cold/occluded front, associated with a low in the Baltic region moved SW over the southern North Sea and English Channel, being aligned across the Channel narrows early on 2nd. Ahead of this front a band of low cloud and drizzle moved down the Channel, clearing SW England during the afternoon of the 2nd (see Fig 1).

It seems evident that conditions of fog/haze and light NE/offshore winds had drifted birds migrating ahead of the front down the Channel and offshore from the French coast out over Biscay. During succeeding days the front moved away SE, but otherwise conditions over Biscay remained anticyclonic with local fog banks until 5 Oct, when a cold front associated with a low centred west of Iceland, and moving slowly eastwards over much of the N. Atlantic, began to head SE towards Biscay. This affected most of the north coast of Spain by 6 Oct (Fig 2). In view of what follows, it should be mentioned that on the whole voyage we had recorded only about 50 Gannets *Sula bassana*, and these all within some 30nm, from just north of Ushant.

During 2-9 Oct we were based at Llanes, 100km west of Santander, and virtually throughout this period migrants were arriving along the coastline from offshore fog, as the sun burned through. Species involved, in decreasing order of abundance, included Meadow Pipit, *alba* Wagtails, Robins, Blackbird *T. merula*, Goldcrest, Chiffchaff, Short-toed Lark *Calandrella cinerea*, *flava* wagtails, Song Thrush, Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*, Skylark *Alauda arvensis*, Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*, Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*, Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*, Garden Warbler *S. borin*, Ring Ousel *T. torquatus*, and singles of Tawny Pipit *A. campestris*, Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* and Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca*. Total numbers must have run into thousands.

In addition to coastal trips, on the morning of 5 Oct (with light NW breeze and thin hazy cloud after a foggy start) we drove to Covadonga, and thence up to the mountain lakes about 30km SW of Llanes. Here, scrub on the north face of the mountains at 300m altitude was again full

of very tired migrants - several hundred birds were seen. The composition of this 'fall' was rather different, in that Wagtails and Short-toed Larks were absent, Tawny Pipits were much more plentiful, and Ring Ousels marginally so, while Linnets, Dunnocks *Prunella modularis* and Chaffinches *Fringilla coelebs* were all present in numbers.

It would appear that birds drifted offshore into Finisterre/Biscay during the preceding nights had subsequently reorientated S to SW at dawn, whilst birds coming into the area on the nights of 3-4 and 4-5 Oct may have been drifted down by winds backing NW during 4-5 Oct, ahead of the front. Migrants were still arriving next morning in thick foggy/cloudy conditions, with drizzle and periods of heavier rain, and winds gradually veering through N to E, and visibility less than 1nm. The advancing front had also initiated a movement of Gannets, with birds heading west close inshore at up to 300/hour.

No watching was undertaken on 7 Oct, when conditions were much improved following passage of the front, but next day low cloudy conditions with drizzle and occasional heavy rain developed from the southwest. Passerines were again coming off the sea, though in small numbers, but of more interest was a quite phenomenal passage of Gannets, with birds heading west at about 1,350/hr, rising to 1,800/hr by 1700, when they were accompanied by Lesser Black-backed Gulls *Larus fuscus* at 250/hr, Manx Shearwaters *Puffinus puffinus* at 100/hr, and two Little Gulls *L. minutus*.

The suggestion here is that the Gannets (and Shearwaters) may have been deflected east or SE into Biscay during their southward migration ahead of the front. Then, as numbers increased in the catchment area of SE Biscay, coupled with the development of unsuitable fishing conditions (the changing wind direction and strength led to churning seas and reduced underwater visibility), this mass exodus became initiated.

The return trip to Plymouth, 9-10 Oct, was undertaken in conditions of light variable winds, and produced no birds worth a mention.

Any additional observations covering these dates and areas, attesting to the scope and range of these movements, would be greatly welcomed, in order to help complete the picture during this period.

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Dr. J.D. Parrack, 1 Woodburn Drive, Whitley Bay, Tyne & Wear, NE26 3HS.

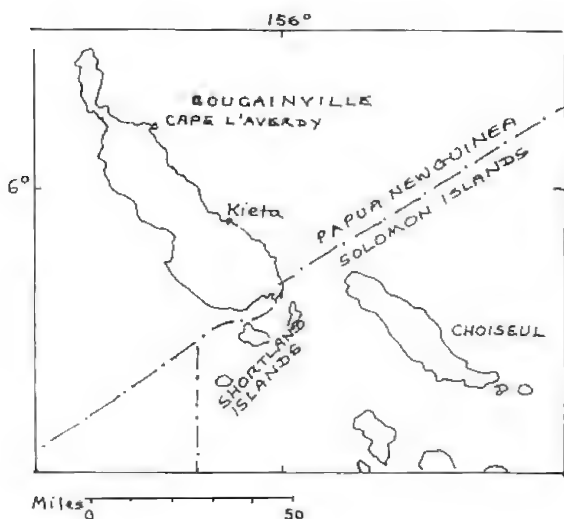
## HEINROTH'S SHEARWATER OFF BOUGAINVILLE ISLAND - JANUARY 1990.

By Captain D.M. Simpson, M.N.

**Background.** Heinroth's Shearwater *Puffinus heinrothi* was, until recently, only known from the seas near Rabaul, New Britain, and its breeding place was unknown. In August 1979 a young bird with traces of down, presumably on its first flight, was picked up at Arawa, Bougainville. This record was the first for half a century, and the first for Bougainville. This was followed by another almost a year later; on an evening in July 1980, at about 2200, an adult was captured when it flew into a tunnel workshop at Panguna. These two records indicate probable breeding areas in the Crown Prince Range, Bougainville (Hadden (1981), in Coates (1985)).

Ernest Mayr (1945) describes the bird thus:- Small (11"), sooty-brown (darker above), except for a whitish area in the middle of the belly, and an admixture of white on chin and throat. White under wing. Bill slender and very long. Legs light brown.

Brian Coates (1985) expands on this by describing the bill as dark, and the feet 'flesh-coloured with blackish margins'. He goes on to say that the white on the abdomen is variable in size, and probably often difficult to detect at sea. This fine book even contains a photograph (by Don Hadden) of a live Heinroth's Shearwater, presumably the one captured on Bougainville in 1980, which does indeed show the bill as being very long and slender.



**Observation.** From October 1988 to February 1989 I was in command of MV *Moresby Chief*, and made several voyages between New Guinea, New Britain and Bougainville. I was always on the lookout for Heinroth's Shearwater, but without success. On one occasion I did sight a lone medium-sized petrel off Buka Island, which was brown above with a lot of white on the underbody, but I do not believe this was a Heinroth's.

In November 1989 I returned to Papua New Guinea (PNG), this time in command of MV *Lae Chief*, trading between New Britain, New Ireland, Bougainville and New Guinea.

On 21 January 1990 I sailed from Kieta, Bougainville, bound for Lac. At 1730, when off the east coast of Bougainville (in position 05°35'S 155°09'E - close off Cape L'Averdy, with the rugged Emperor Range of mountains as a background view) I spotted a party of 12 small petrels resting on the calm sea surface.

I headed the ship straight for them. They took off together in typical shearwater manner, and flew very low across the surface with rapid wingbeats, interspersed with short and banking glides (this, despite the total lack of wind). They settled again a mile or so away, and I continued the chase in *Lae Chief*. The sky was overcast, and the light not too good, though the visibility was excellent. Once again the birds broke before I could get close enough, and all I could see was that they were small dark shearwaters, perhaps 10"-12" in length, with long wings and long slender dark bills. I could not see their feet, nor detect any white on the underbody, though I fancied the underwings were whitish.

Reluctantly, I had to call off the chase as the flock was edging towards the beach. As the *Lae Chief* turned away, I saw a lone bird on the surface, which had probably splintered off the main group. We were able to approach this much closer before it took off, and this time there was no doubt about the underwings; these were white except for the tips and trailing edges. The rest of the bird appeared very dark, with a noticeably long and slender bill. Again, the feet were not clearly seen.

**Conclusion.** I firmly believe that these birds were a party of Heinroth's Shearwaters in their 'home waters'.

**COMMENT (by WRPB).** Since this species has been almost entirely absent for half a century, this is an important record.

Captain D.M. Simpson, M.N., 4 Ruswarp Lane, Whitby, North Yorks, YO21 1ND.

## SEABIRDS OBSERVED AROUND COLOMBO, SRI LANKA.

by Captain D.M. Simpson, M.N.,  
with comments from Rex I. De Silva.

The following seabird species were observed from MV *Pacific Beaver* during the period 25 April to 30 July 1989. The vessel was either berthed in Colombo port, or working offshore at the Single Point Mooring (SPM) tanker buoy, situated 5nm west of the port entrance. Species which could not be positively identified are indicated by the symbol (U).



**Weather conditions:** South-west monsoon pattern. Wind - generally West to SSW force 2-6. Visibility: generally good except in rain storms/squalls. Swell: always from WSW, 1-4 metres.

**Wilson's Storm-petrel** *Oceanites oceanicus*. This species first appeared around the SPM buoy during the first week of June, and thereafter was quite common offshore, in loose flocks seldom numbering more than 30 birds. The square tail and white rump were diagnostic.

**Swinhoe's Storm-petrel** *Oceanodroma monorhis* (U). One or two seen on 4 July, amongst a flock of Wilson's, were all dark brown in colour, slightly paler on the underwings, and slightly larger than the Wilson's. They were perhaps this species, but there are other possibilities eg.

**Bulwer's Petrel** *Bulweria bulweri*.

**COMMENT.** Rex I. De Silva (RIDS) *pers comm*, states that "This observation is perplexing, as this species has never been reliably recorded from Sri Lanka. (Previous references in Henry (1985) and Phillips (1952) are errors resulting from a misidentification of a specimen of *O. leucorhoa*). This has been corrected subsequently in Phillips (1978). Two specimens of *O. leucorhoa* have been collected from Sri Lanka, both of which are dark-rumped individuals, and thus similar to *O. monorhis*. Hence I wonder if the bird(s) seen could have been this species."

**Spot-billed Pelican** *Pelecanus philippensis*. Six were observed roosting in a large tree by the busy Galle Road, on the outskirts of Colombo, at 1800 on 10 June. I was taken to this site by a Sri Lankan friend, who told me that these birds have used this particular tree as a roost for many years, and sometimes over 100 birds can be seen there. Otherwise, this species is not at all common in the wet SW part of the island. It favours the drier eastern side of Sri Lanka, and in some areas is quite common.

**COMMENT.** RIDS reports that this species is **never** associated with the sea, although it may be found in coastal lagoons and estuaries. Formerly a 'Dry Zone' species, its range has recently extended into the 'Wet Zone', where it is now rather common.

**Whiskered Tern** *Chlidonias hybridus* (U). Several seen at Colombo port on 25 Apr. During May and June I observed it at tanks and marshes in and around Colombo. Apparently the species is primarily a winter visitor to Sri Lanka, but quite a few overstay during the summer.

**Roseate Tern** *S. dougallii*. During the last week of April and the first week of June up to 100 of these birds were to be found around the SPM buoy. By mid-June they had all moved off elsewhere, possibly to their breeding grounds on the eastern side of the island. But these were not in breeding plumage, lacking the distinctive pinkish flush. They were identified by their elegant appearance, blackish bills, and very long outer tail-feathers.

**Swift Tern** *S. bergii*. Fairly common offshore throughout the period. Large numbers were at the SPM buoy during the first week of May (300+ stood on the floating fuel hose). Most of these had left by mid-

May, probably to their breeding grounds on the eastern beaches, as these were in immaculate plumage.

**Bridled Tern** *S. anaethetus*. The first pair was seen offshore on 27 May, flying west. After that date the species was seen regularly offshore, with numbers gradually increasing. 20 were seen at the SPM buoy on 24 June.

**COMMENT.** RIDS comments that these records are of interest, as The Seabird Watch has never observed this species prior to the first week of July.

**Brown Noddy** *Anous stolidus*. One landed aboard whilst at the SPM buoy on 31 May. This was the only noddy I saw throughout the 3-month period in Sri Lanka.

**South Polar Skua** *Catharacta maccormicki*, and **Brown Skua** *C. antarctica lombergi*. Skuas were regularly seen offshore around the SPM buoy. Various forms of *C. a. lombergi* were observed: some were all dark, except for the white flashes on the wings, typical of *Catharacta* skuas, and others showed a lot of white on the head. Indeed, one or two had the whole of the head white, with a yellowish tinge. Parts of the underbody were white, and with the very conspicuous white 'windows' on the wings, were obviously *C. maccormicki*. I did not have my copy of Harrison's *Seabirds - an identification guide* with me, but from *The Slater Field Guide to Australian Birds*, which I was using, I am satisfied that all these birds were forms of both these species. Up to six at a time were sighted off Colombo.

**COMMENT.** RIDS writes: "These observations are interesting as they do seem to add further evidence for the presence of both species in Sri Lanka. Nine seasons of The Seabird Watch show a preponderance of Brown Skuas, and we have only a single confirmed sighting of *C. maccormicki*. All Sri Lankan specimens collected to date (Colombo Museum, British Museum, and National Zoological Gardens) are Brown Skuas".

**Little Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax niger*. This was very common in and around Colombo, wherever there is a tank or bit of fresh water, but I did not see it offshore.

**COMMENT.** RIDS writes: "In Sri Lanka this species is never found in marine habitats, although it may be present in coastal lagoons etc. Hence it is debatable if this should be included in a paper on seabirds".

#### REFERENCES (quoted by Rex De Silva).

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Phillips, W.W.A. 1978. *An annotated checklist of the birds of Ceylon*. Colombo. Wildlife and Nature Protection Society.

Captain D.M. Simpson, M.N., c/o 4 Ruswarp Lane, Whitby, North Yorks, YO21 1ND.  
Rex I De Silva. Hepporawatte, Dampe, Madapatha, (Via Piliyandala), Sri Lanka.

## FALKLANDS MEMORIES.

by Commander J.D. Plummer, Royal Navy.

During the Falklands Campaign, while serving in HMS *Yarmouth*, I did not have an opportunity to set foot ashore. But in 1988 I more than made up for that when I was appointed to serve on the Headquarters Staff there. The timespan of my appointment meant seeing through a Falklands winter, with departure on the approach of summer.

Many people have asked me since my return what I did on the Falklands, as life must have been somewhat tedious. My reply would be "where in the world would you see at close quarters from one's office, sheep, Upland Geese, Kelp Geese, Dolphin Gulls and Long-tailed Meadowlarks?" So you can see that I rarely had a dull moment!

The Upland Geese became quite tame. Anyone opening an office window at the HQ would cause the geese to think that food was on offer. On many occasions that would be the case, and certainly sandwiches and bread rolls were popular. That said, their enormous appetite was such that there was no need for a lawn mower on the expanse of grass around the HQ Building, as they would do the job for us. They spent much time preening themselves, and the ganders seemed quite clean until matched against freshly fallen snow.

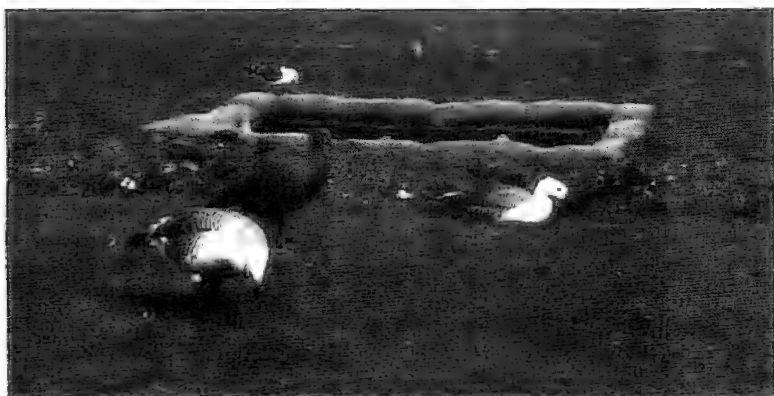
Kelp Geese made only fleeting visits, but the totally white male is an impressive bird. I saw many geese on outlying islands. The colour contrast of the male and female is amazing, and pairs could be picked out from a distance, as to a lesser extent also the Upland Geese.

Like the Kelp Geese, Dolphin Gulls were not regular visitors to the Headquarters, but when they were around I was struck by their brilliant red legs and feet, and darker red bill.

The Long-tailed Meadowlark, the local Starling/Robin, with its glowing red breast, could be seen on the ground around parked Landrovers looking for scraps of food. One bird seemed to take over an area near the HQ entrance - this habit is akin to the Robin here in UK, being very protective towards his 'patch'.



Striated Caracara (or Johnny Rook) *Phalacrocorax australis*



Upland Geese *Chloephaga picta leucoptera*



2nd year King Penguin *Aptenodytes patagonicus* with prominent white "collar". Mare Harbour, Falklands, February 1990

*Photo: W.R.P. Bourne*

Away from my office, my thoughts would turn towards the penguins. I find them fascinating birds. Although I saw many from the air when transitting from one place to another, I vividly remember trips to Saunders Island in the northwest, and Sea Lion Island to the south. On Saunders, the Magellanic was abundant, and it appeared as though there would be a 'duty penguin' sufficiently brave and patient to stand and be photographed before disappearing down its burrow at the last moment. But once in its burrow I loved the way it would watch people, first with one eye and then the other, turning its head from side to side.

Sea Lion Island in November was home to thousands of penguins, mostly Rockhoppers - my favourite despite the noise a large colony can make. They are remarkably agile, particularly in the way they can scale steep cliffs.

Also on this island I came across a large colony of King Cormorants on the cliff tops. They seemed to get on quite well with the Rockhopper neighbours, and some intermingling took place.

Back on East Falklands, some minefields near Stanley appear to be a safe haven for penguins, since it seems that they are too light to detonate a mine.

I do not know whether future appointments will send me back down to the Falklands, but should this be so I shall relish once again the remarkable bird life the Islands have to offer.

Commander J.D. Plummer R.N., 36A Church Street, Amptill, Bedford, MK45 2PL.

## BOMBAY NOTES 1990.

By Commander M. B. Casement, Royal Navy

My wife and I were staying with our married daughter in Bombay in February/March this year, in their flat facing westwards overlooking the Arabian Sea. I spent many happy hours with a powerful telescope observing the bird-life on the rocks below and, of course, the antics of the ubiquitous Black (or Pariah) Kites *Milvus migrans* and House Crows *Corvus splendens* overhead.

Chief amongst the seabirds were Northern Black-headed Gulls *Larus ridibundus* which congregated daily to roost on a rocky outcrop; numbers increased to 300-400 maximum as the tide reached its high point. These were passing through on their migration northward, and were in various states of moult in the process of acquiring their breeding plumage, with a few only showing chocolate heads. Some distance offshore were unidentifiable terns, most probably Whiskered *Chlidonias hybrida* or White-cheeked Terns *Sterna repressa*, heading northwards in small groups, and on the rocks below were Indian Pond Herons (or Paddybirds) *Ardeola grayii*, and Reef Herons *Egretta gularis* (mostly dark phase, but with a few light phased individuals). Occasional Common Sandpipers *Actitis hypoleucos* also paused briefly.



Brown-headed Gulls showing three different stages of moult on head — white, mottled grey, and dark chocolate. Bombay Harbour, March 1990

Photo: M.B.C.

I also spent a long time scanning the gulls trying to identify any Indian Black-headed (or Brown-headed) Gulls *L. brunnicephalus* amongst them; these are shown in the local checklist, produced by the Bombay Natural History Society, as a common winter migrant, and was a species new to me. I searched in vain for the distinctive white patches on the wing-tips, but finally on 13 March saw what I was looking for. One individual with such patches flew in to settle with a group of about 300 *L. ridibundus*, and I noted its distinctly larger size, the feet a more vivid orange/red, and no black tip to its red beak. Having at last identified this specimen, I carefully searched all the others for another hour, but finally concluded that this was the only one present here.

On 15 March we crossed Bombay Harbour on a tourist boat to Elephanta Island, and I was surprised to find that here the Brown-headed was much in evidence. Small groups in the water flew off as we approached, and throughout the return trip that day about 30-40 were counted. They were identifiable in flight by their white wing-tips, visible from a great distance, as the accompanying photographs show, rather similar to the Common Gull *L. canus*. There was great variety in their state of moult, and on the coloration of their heads, varying from white to dark chocolate, with some an intermediate mottled grey. In the distance were a few Herring Gulls *L. argentatus*, and a single Great Black-headed Gull *L. ichthyaeetus*, identifiable by its larger relative size, black head, and its noticeably prominent silhouette riding high in the water.

Reports of **Brown-headed Gulls** have not featured in *Sea Swallow* for a number of years, and I suspect that they have been regularly overlooked. Bernard and Elizabeth Watts recorded them on 17 Mar 80, in the approaches to Madras Harbour, and off Colombo on 19 Mar (*Sea Swallow* 31:58-59), and G.S. Willis saw some in Bombay Harbour in Jan 56 (*Sea Swallow* 9:6). M.E. Jones recorded this species wintering (Sep-Mar) in the Hooghli River, Calcutta (*Sea Swallow* 14:58), and Captain P.W.G. Chilman saw several in the Bangkok River on 13 Feb 67 (*Sea Swallow* 22:56). Captain G.S. Tuck in his summary of seabirds in the Persian Gulf (*Sea Swallow* 23:16) wrote "Occurrence doubtful. More information needed". Do keep a lookout for this species, and report it, please.

Concerning landbirds, there is a surprising variety to be seen within the city of Bombay, especially near the Racecourse, and in the "Hanging Gardens" area, where one cannot fail to see the spectacular White-breasted Kingfisher *Halcyon smyrnensis*, Rose-ringed Parakeets *Psittacula krameri*, Magpie Robins *Copsychus saularis*, and various species of barbets *Megalaima* sp., mynahs *Sturnus* sp., bulbuls *Pycnonotus* sp., and shrikes *Lanius* sp. Local knowledge is essential, and I would strongly recommend any RNBWS visitor to Bombay to make himself known, as I did, at the Bombay Natural History Society. Mr J.S. (Jerry) Serrao consented to be nominated as the RNBWS local representative (see inside rear cover) and was extremely helpful to me. He organised a trip to the Borivili National Park, about an hour's drive away, where we saw many other spectacular species such as Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone paradisi* and Racket-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus paradiseus*, not to mention an orphaned baby cheetah.

Further afield, no visit to India is complete without a visit to Rajasthan, and to Bharatpur National Park. The star attractions, Siberian Cranes *Grus leucogeranus* were still there on 6 March, as were a multitude of herons, storks, ducks and other waterfowl. . . . But that is another story.

M.B.C.

### Information requested.

#### Reports of Swift Terns *Sterna bergii* with yellow legs.

Frank Walker, writing from Tasmania, has noted an adult of this species, with begging young, showing "bright yellow-ochre legs and feet". Others in the group of twelve were black. Checking with all the reference books available locally in Australia, including S. Cramp *et al*, *Birds of the Western Palearctic (BWP)* Vol. 4:36, all described, or illustrated, the legs and feet "dull black", and he could find no mention of variants with yellow legs. Walker remembered seeing another specimen, presumed adult, similarly with yellow feet in Oman a number of years previously, and wonders whether any other readers would care to comment, or have any similar records?

Comments or observations to me please, and I will forward.

M.B.C.

## OBITUARY

**Sir Peter Scott, C.H., C.B.E., D.S.C., F.R.S. (1909-89)**

Peter Scott was the object of countless hero-worshippers of my generation, and for me this began when a ten-year old schoolboy. The following story is probably typical of many.

In 1943 he came to my prep school, and enthralled us all with a lecture, in two parts, which happened to cover the twin passions of my life even then - the Royal Navy, and birdwatching. He first described in vivid detail his wartime exploits in MTBs, in skirmishes with German E-boats in the North Sea and the English Channel. The second part covered his expeditions in search of wildfowl (ducks and geese). He illustrated his talk with a portable blackboard and coloured chalks, and we watched spellbound as he drew a magnificent portrait of a rare vagrant from Eastern Europe, the Red-breasted Goose. That blackboard remained untouched in a corner of the classroom for the remaining three years of my time in the school, though I subsequently learned that an unknowing new member of the staff wiped it clean about five years later.

As Lieutenant Commander Peter Scott DSC RNVR, he was a member of the committee which established, in 1946, the Royal Naval Birdwatching Society. Despite his ever-increasing commitments to numerous other societies and organisations, he remained a Vice-President, keeping a close fatherly eye on our activities ever since. He will be sorely missed by many.

M.B.C.

## REVIEWS

Andrew M. Paterson 1990. *Aves Marinas de Malaga y Mar de Alboran*. Pp. 173, 15 figures and a map. Departamento de Protección de Fauna y Flora. Agencia de Medio Ambiente. Junta de Andalucía/Artes e Industrias Graficas Minerva S.A., Enramadilla 23, 41 018 Sevilla, Spain. ISBN 84-87294-08-1.

This is a compact field guide to the seabirds of the western extremity of the Mediterranean summarising many original observations, written in Spanish with good English summaries and a substantial bibliography. Anyone interested in the seabirds of the area should be sure to get it.

Jeffrey A. Spendelow and Stephen R. Patton 1988. *National Atlas of Coastal Waterbird Colonies in the Contiguous United States: 1976-82*. U.S. Fish Wildl. Serv. Biol. Rep. 88(5). Pp. x + 326. Information Transfer Specialist, National Wetlands Research Center, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1010 Gause Boulevard, Slidell, LA 70458, U.S.A.

A concise summary of the results of the first general census of breeding coastal waterbirds in the main body of the United States under the headings General distribution and nesting habitat: Coastal distribution and abundance: Tabulated breeding population: Tabulated colony-size frequency distribution: Maps of coastal distribution and abundance: Sources: Bibliography. It would be nice if it were now possible to persuade the banding scheme to map the non-breeding ranges as well.

W.R.P. Bourne



## TAIL PIECE

The Victorian attitude to migrants in the Ionian Sea.

(Contributed by W.R.P. Bourne)

In the course of his despatches to *The Times* while on the way to the Crimea, its famous reporter William Howard Russell provided an interesting early record of the occurrence of landbirds at sea on a troopship between Malta and the Peloponnese in the first four days of April 1854, and the reponse of an earlier generation of servicemen:-

"The men ate and drank, and then walked on deck until they were able to eat and drink again, and so on until bed time. In the course of the day many small birds fluttered on the yards, masts and bulwarks, plumed their little jaded wings, and after a short rest, impelled by an inscrutable instinct, launched themselves once more into the bosom of the deep. Some of them were common titlarks, others little greyish buntings, others yellow and black fellows. They were agreeable visitors, and served to afford much entertainment to Jack and the soldiers. Three of the owls and a titlark were at once introduced to each other in a cage, and the ship's cat was thrown in by way of making an impromptu 'happy family'. Pussy obstinately refused to hold any communication with the owls - they seemed in turn to hate each other, and all evinced determined animosity towards the unfortunate titlark, which speedily languished and died."

(Bentley, N. (Ed.) 1966. Russell's Despatches from the Crimea 1854-1856. Andre Deutsch, London: 26-27).

## Errata to SEA SWALLOW 38

My apologies for the following:

page 9. Entry for Bernard Watts - itinerary should read: 'SS *Canberra*. Southampton-Madeira-Florida, Jan '86; SS *Queen Elizabeth 2*. Florida-Panama-Magellan Strait-Rio etc.....(Jan-Apr '86)'

COMMENT. As far as is known, SS *Canberra* has never transited the Magellan Straits.

page 50. Caption for top photograph 'Ryuku Robin' amend to read: 'Siberian Rubythroat *Erithacus calliope*'.

page 62. Para on Bridled Tern, amend lines 4-5 to read:

'The duration of migration was only eight weeks (7 Aug to 8 Oct) as against 16-18 weeks in earlier years (De Silva 1987). The recent decline in intensity of migration cannot be easily explained.....'

M.B.C.

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## INSTRUCTIONS TO AUTHORS

Interested persons are invited to submit contributions for *Sea Swallow*. Authors do not need to be R.N.B.W.S. members. Material may take the form of papers, notes, progress reports, letters or reviews.

Manuscripts should ideally be typed in double spacing and submitted in duplicate. Figures and diagrams should be prepared in the size of final production.

The style used in *Sea Swallow* should be followed, with the standard abbreviations, nomenclature and use of references as in *British Birds*.

Contributions are welcome at any time, but if for inclusion in the next edition, must reach the Editor by **31st March**.